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THE
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GIRL
OF THE
FAMILY
BY THE AUTHOR
OF
"A TRAP TO CATCH
A SUNBEAM"

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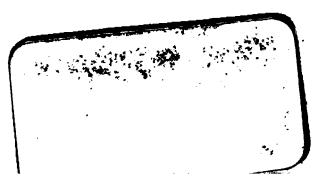

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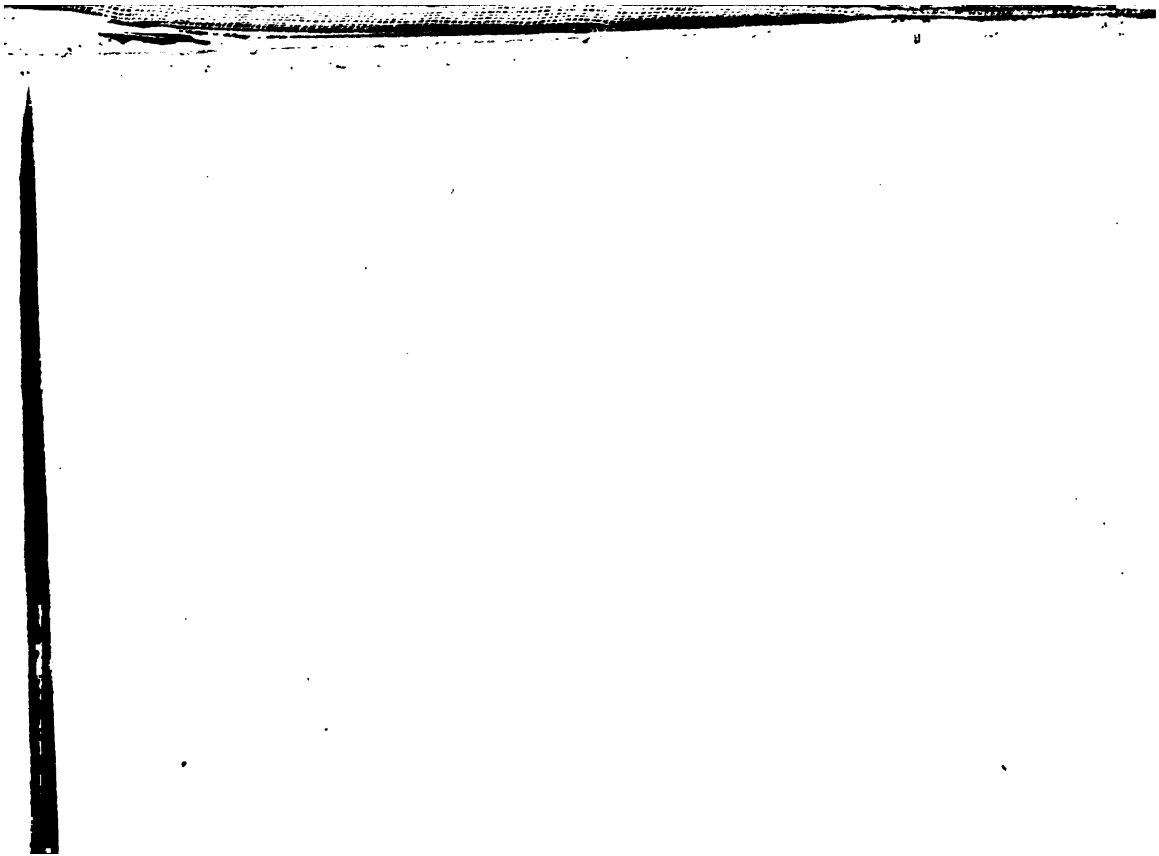

THE NAUGHTY GIRL

OF

THE FAMILY.

BY

MRS. HENRY MACKARNESS,

AUTHOR OF "A TRAP TO CATCH A SUNBEAM."

ILLUSTRATED BY F. W. LAWSON.

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THE

NAUGHTY GIRL OF THE FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

"For goodness' sake, Lucy, don't be so awfully good. I see no harm in it whatever; it's only fun."

"It's not kind fun, or quite honourable either, Jeanie, I think."

"Nonsense; she shouldn't leave it about if she doesn't like it looked at. I'm only illustrating it for her."

"Oh, yes; go on, Jeanie, do. Never mind Lucy; make haste, or she'll be back. That's delicious—the best you've done. I wonder if it's anything like the old dame? She must be a regular old quiz, if she's anything like her daughter."

"Oh, come, Carry! Miss Barton isn't ugly."

"Well, no, not ugly; but queer and prim-looking. Fancy her old, with thin grey hair, and no teeth. She would look just like your picture of her mother."

"Really, Jeanie, you must not go on drawing in that book, or I certainly will go down and tell mamma."

"'Tell tale tit, your tongue shall be slit; and all the dogs in the town shall have a bit.'"

"Carry, that is vulgar, as well as impertinent. I think you both forget I am the eldest; and that mamma has said I am to keep order when Miss Barton is not in the room."

"Dear old Lucy, yes; it is a shame to bully you. Now look here. I only want to put a pipe in the mouth of this 'good vicar of G——,' by whom I suppose she means our worthy parson, and then I'll shut the book up directly. There, now it's done; it looks lovely, and I won't draw another figure. Shall I show you my illustrations?"

"No; I will not share in your folly in any way. I consider it a gross piece of impertinence, and shall consider Miss Barton much to blame if she does not punish you severely."

"What would punish me, Lucy?"

"I am sure I don't know; you care for nothing."

"Yes I do, for one thing; if dear old dad were to be angry with me, I should break my heart. But, bless him! he'd laugh till he cried at my illustrations of Miss Barton's diary."

"I am sure he would not, Jeanie. He is too much of a gentleman to encourage you in such a dishonourable action as reading anyone's private journal."

"Not very private—left open on the school-room table."

"Hold your tongue, Carry, and finish your exercise. More profitable employment than arguing with me, or encouraging Jeanie in her follies."

"Lucy, Lucy, you really are too good, as I told you before. I shall certainly make you a surplice, and have stated hours fixed for you to preach to us, or else beg you to join some pious sisterhood, who would listen with more profit and attention to your exhortations than your naughty sisters do here. But see, I have so far obeyed you, as to leave off the occupation I so enjoyed, and take quietly to my translation of 'Il Ventaglio.' I'm sure the author has never been so rendered before. I am certain

no one would believe it had ever been in any other language but English; it has not the slightest trace of a translation about it."

"The author would not recognise it, I daresay, Jeanie."

"No, that he certainly wouldn't. Carry, put that book down directly; go on with your work, and let us try at least to look as good as Lucy."

The door opened as the speaker uttered the last words, and a small, childish-looking woman entered, with a pale, careworn, but interesting face, which might have been pretty if hope and gaiety had lent their aid to give light and expression to the regular tranquil features.

"Are you ready to have your exercise corrected, Caroline?" she asked; and the voice—a low, tender contralto—had a tremor in it, as though but a little matter would make the speaker burst into tears.

"No, Miss Barton. I have only done two lines."

"Indeed! You have been very idle then."

"I'm sure I've not: it's so hard."

"Well, do not contradict quite so sharply, for that is not ladylike. If you want anything explained, bring it to me; but I think you have done others before equally difficult."

"Oh, yes, Miss Barton; she can do it if she likes, I'm sure. She's not been trying," said Lucy.

"Thank you for nothing," answered Carry, in a low voice, and with a little spiteful grin at her sister.

"That's ladylike again, Carry; upon my word you'll adorn society when you come out."

"I think, Lucy, my dear, it is scarcely your place to correct her. You had better leave her to me."

"She's very rude to you too, Miss Barton. I'm sure it must be trying enough to teach, teach all day, without having to encounter impertinence and disobedience as well."

Miss Barton made no answer, but a suppressed sigh seemed to agree with the truth of the words. She opened her desk, and taking up the journal which had caused so much conversation, was about to put it in her desk, when a smothered titter from Carry attracted her attention.

"What are you laughing at?" she asked.

"Nothing," answered Carry, still tittering and looking at Jeanie, who was bending her head over her writing, as though giving it her greatest attention.

"You cannot be so silly as to laugh at nothing,

Carry; and I must really insist on your telling me, for it is so impolite to have a joke in which the company cannot join."

"Yes, mamma hates that school-girl giggle, Carry, you know."

"Lucy!" said Miss Barton, reprovingly.

"Well, but really, Miss Barton, is it not rude of Carry to giggle in that silly way?"

"I am just telling her so. It is not necessary for you to attack her also."

Before Lucy could reply, the door slowly opened, and a small head, covered with a wealth of golden hair, was put cautiously through the opening, and from amidst the golden shower gleamed two bright blue eyes, sparkling with fun and mischief, and a little voice said,—

"Mamma wants oo, Looty."

A smile, one of the strange ones which so rarely rested on her lips, now lighted up Miss Barton's face, making it almost beautiful, as she said, in a low, coaxing voice,—

"Come in, May, won't you?"

The child crept in, stood for a moment close by the door, and then flying into Miss Barton's inviting arms, buried her sweet, merry face in her neck.

"Did you say mamma wanted me, May?" asked Lucy.

"Yes, directly," answered the little maiden, as soon as she had sufficiently kissed Miss Barton, and settled herself comfortably on her knee.

"I can go, Miss Barton?" asked Lucy.

"Certainly, my love."

Lucy rose, and carefully collecting her work, and placing it neatly in her box, which she closed and locked, she walked out of the room, and went to the morning-room, where at that hour she was sure to find her mother.

Lying back in a luxurious arm-chair, in the most elegant of morning *negligés*, was Mrs. Mark Deane. On a small table beside her was the last new novel, with a paper-knife in it to keep the place, and a silver inkstand and blotting-book, on which lay some scented note-paper and envelopes. On a chair near was a gilt work-basket, the contents of which were somewhat inconsistent with its elegance, for there lay in it coarse flannel, and several yards of a stout blue and white check print, with some unbleached calico, and two or three pinafores of lilac cotton.

"Oh, Lucy, child," she said, as the door opened, "I sent for you about this work. Cannot Miss

Barton and you, amongst you, finish it up to-day? I have promised it to-morrow."

"We will try, mamma, dear; but the girls have not nearly finished their studies yet. I do not think they will have time for needle-work this morning. I can take some, and do it."

"Well, do, love. I have finished all the pinafores; but I can do no more to-day, for I've several notes to write before lunch, and immediately after I drive with Lady Maudesley. She wants me to go to heaps of places with her, so that I am sure I shall not be back much before dinner."

"I'll take the calico, mamma, and perhaps Miss Barton will be able to manage the flannel,—that is all, is it not?—not this check, too?"

"No, that is for frocks for the little Martins. There is no hurry about them. And, oh! stay, Lucy, there is another thing. Your father wants those invitations written and sent out for the 19th, and Miss Barton and you must help in doing that."

"Very well, mamma; but I thought Francis had decided on a cricket-match?"

"Yes, he has; but your father intends to give the dinner, and wishes me to ask some ladies, and finish

up with a dance and little supper in the evening. A fearfully long, fatiguing affair, I think; but he wishes it, and Francis declares it will be 'awfully jolly;' so I suppose it must be. There's the list in my blotting-book. Don't take the wrong one, now. I have written on it, 'List for the 19th.' No, not that one; don't you see that's the 24th?—that's an old fogie dinner-party," continued her mother, smiling.

"I have it, mamma;" and taking the list, and the flannel and calico, Lucy left the room with sufficient employment to prevent the possibility of her going to practise archery with some young friends, as she had wished to do. But Lucy never disputed her mother's will, never allowed her own wishes to stand for a moment in place of her mother's; it never seemed to occur to her that it could signify what she wanted to do, if "mamma" wished her to do something else—all her own amusements and inclination were at once and unquestioningly set aside. So, quietly returning to the school-room, she requested Miss Barton to finish the flannel, and write half the invitations; and she carried her work and writing to a room in which I must introduce another member of the family—good, venerable, Mrs. Deane. Never could old age more fitly be

styled honourable than in the person of Mrs. Deane. A cheerful solemnity marked her every word and action; in her soft, sweet, blue eyes there was a merry twinkle, which showed keen enjoyment of wit and humour; the ready smile was on her lips to welcome all who entered her room, and only words of courtesy and kindness ever passed from between them. "Bring me the little ones to kiss and love," she used to say,—"never to scold; I'm too old to scold;" so that grandmamma's room seemed to the children a haven of peace and love, and no punishment was so grievous to them as to be told they were not good enough to go to grandmamma; and even the high-spirited, passionate Jeanie was brought to reason and penitence many a time with the gentle words, written with her trembling hand and sent to the erring little one, "Grandmamma's dear love, and she's so sorry for Jeanie."

The house being a very large one, enabled Mr. Deane to give a pleasant suite of rooms to his mother; and there, ever since the death of her husband, she had passed her peaceful life; and in affording this refuge to his mother Mr. Deane had truly found he had "entertained an angel unawares." She was reading when Lucy entered; in a large-printed Bible, which

lay always on the table beside her, and to which during the day she constantly referred. Truly could she say, "In Thy law do I delight." But there was no cant, no set phrases ever on her lips to make a show of her religion; she seldom spoke of it—never, indeed, save when anyone came to her in sorrow or difficulty; then, laying her thin, fair hand on the Holy Book, she would quote some text so well applied, and so comforting, that the hearer could well believe how perfectly she knew the Scriptures herself, and how often she had found comfort therein.

"Well, Lucy," she said, "have you come to sit with your old granny?"

"Yes, dear; I thought you would like it."

"Of course I do, love. What are you going to do?"

"Write some invitations for a party on the 19th, and finish this work for mamma."

"A party on the 19th; stay, the 19th—that must be Francis's birthday, is it not?"

"Yes, grandmamma; and he has chosen as his treat a cricket-match, and papa wants it to finish up with an evening party."

"Very good; that will suit you young folks vastly, I should think."

"Yes, dear; and you will like to come and see the cricket, will you not?"

"Surely. It's a fine game, and reminds me of my young days; your grandfather was one of the best cricketers in the county, and proud enough was I to see him play, and his boys after him. Let me hold that stuff while you cut it,—I can do that. I only wish I could help you make the things; but the old eyes fail daily, Lucy, and the needle and I must part company for ever. However, thank God, I can still read my big print, here," she said, laying her hand on the Bible; "and if I live till the eyes are quite gone, I can still read it with my mind's eye. I know most of it by heart, Lucy."

"Yes, dear grandmamma, I know you do; and I hope I shall if I live to be your age."

"I hope so too, love. And how are all the rest of the little folks? I haven't seen them this morning."

"They have not quite finished their studies, grandmamma. Carry has been so idle this morning, and Jeanie, too, I think."

"The warm weather makes us all feel a little lazy. And you, dearie, do you do any studies? or have you quite left off?"

"I work still for the masters, but I am to give up all studies next season, papa says."

"Yes, to be sure, you will have to learn other lessons then, love,—lessons in life, very useful ones, too!"

"Yes, and housekeeping I should like to learn; but mamma says Gough would not like me to interfere. I wish you would speak for me, grandmamma."

"My dear, mamma knows best; she knew nothing of housekeeping, and she has got on very well, you see."

"Yes, with Gough," said Lucy, smiling; "but suppose I don't find a Gough, then what shall I do?"

"Ah! true. Now let me see which way you are going to cut that out. I should like to know if you do Miss Barton's instructions credit—she is herself an admirable workwoman."

In this manner grandmamma changed the subject, for it was one she did not like to speak of, as she differed with Mrs. Mark, and quite agreed with Lucy, in thinking housekeeping a most necessary part of a young lady's education; but she made a rule never to allow the young folks to know she

thought differently to their mother. Dearly she loved these little ones. Of her own four children only Mark remained; two of them were dead, and the other had been in India for years. Mark had married an heiress; and having been successful in a mercantile business himself, he was now living the quiet, pleasant life of an independent country gentleman, in a pretty residence on the banks of the Thames, where fishing and boating gave him employment and amusement, and the facility of a trip to London preserved him from dulness and monotony. He was fond of his children, and they were fond of him—Jeanie especially; but the boy was the idol of both father and mother—the only boy, Francis—and when he was home for his holidays the girls knew that whatever indulgence they required could be obtained, if Francis could be induced to ask for it.

Whilst Lucy was busily working and writing in grandmamma's room, the other girls were completing their work with Miss Barton. Little May, always a privileged guest in the school-room, sat still on Miss Barton's knee, putting her work to rights (or wrongs), and drawing on a slate most wonderful little girls and boys and "Miss Bartons."

Tired at length of all these performances, she drew towards her the journal, which she quietly examined, unobserved by Miss Barton, who was busily engaged correcting exercises, until a burst of merry laughter from May attracted her attention.

"What is it, darling?" she asked.

"Oh, sus a funny sing in is book."

Flushing crimson, Miss Barton took the book from the child, and said:

"My dear, there is nothing funny in that book."

"Oh, es there is, et me show oo."

"I've quite done now, Miss Barton," said Jeanie, starting up. "May I go?" But Miss Barton did not answer; her eyes were fixed on the book May was so eagerly showing her. Again Jeanie addressed her.

Miss Barton then closed the book, and looking up in Jeanie's face with a steady gaze, she said:

"Yes, Jeanie, you can go. You too, Carry. May my little bird, run and play. I will show you a pretty book full of pictures after dinner."

Hurriedly the girls gathered up the school things, and put them away; and Jeanie, taking May on her back, followed by Carry, left the room, and the governess was alone.

"What shall I do?"

CHAPTER II.

LUNCH was over and Lady Maudesley had arrived to drive with Mrs. Mark Deane. She was a pretty little gay woman, with very little mind or sense,—at least so she seemed to wish people to think; for her conversation was of the most vapid kind, and she was always asking people's advice, which, perhaps it is needless to say, she never took. She had married at nineteen a man old enough to be her father, because she thought it would be "so nice" to be called Lady Maudesley, and because every one had told her it was "such a sacrifice!" But she seemed very well contented; she had never cared for anyone else. Sir Charles was very kind; for, soon tired of his pretty toy, he left her to do as she liked. She drove her elegant little pony phaeton and called on her friends; went shopping and to fêtes and exhibitions every day, and went out or received at home every evening during the season, and so passed a butterfly existence which seemed to suit her

exactly. She had recently made Mrs. Deane's acquaintance; and having taken a violent fancy to her and her "sweet girls," she had coaxed her husband to let her have a villa near her. He had consented, as he did to most of her requests. She had been called on by the chief people in the neighbourhood, and was now wishing to return the calls.

"You know them all, love; and I'm so shy—do come with me," she had said to Mrs. Deane; and so it was arranged that the pretty bay ponies should be in readiness to take them both on that, in some persons' opinion, most stupid employment, returning morning calls. But Lady Maudesley liked it; it was an opportunity for her to wear a becoming dress. She was always great in bonnets, and it passed the time—that time between luncheon and dinner, which would otherwise have hung very heavily on her listless little hands.

"You dear thing," she said, rising as Mrs. Deane entered, dressed for their drive. "It's so nice of you to come with me. You know I was out when lots of these awful people came, and I don't know them. Fancy how frightened I should be all alone."

Mrs. Deane only smiled; she never knew quite

what to say to Lady Maudesley; but the day was lovely and the ponies trotted along famously, and it was very pleasant passing through the sweet-scented summer air lying back in the comfortable little carriage; and as her little ladyship liked to hear herself talk, and seemed to care very little for a reply, Mrs. Deane managed to put up with what was certainly rather an infliction, very philosophically. One of their calls was on a Mrs. Warleigh, whom Lady Maudesley declared she was more frightened at than any.

She was very tall and dignified, and certainly could have swallowed whole, if she had had cannibalistic propensities, the little fairy-like being before her. Another somewhat alarming characteristic was, that she prided herself on speaking the truth; so that, utterly disclaiming all the common courtesies of life, she said exactly what she thought and meant. It is needless perhaps to state, that Mrs. Warleigh was not a general favourite.

"How do you do, Mrs. Deane? Good morning, Lady Maudesley. I thought you did not mean to return my call," was her first speech.

"Oh, how could you think I should be so rude, Mrs. Warleigh?"

"Better be rude than false, Lady Maudesley. If you didn't want to know me, why should you call? How are the children, Mrs. Deane—quite well, I hope?"

"Quite well, thank you."

"Ah, they're getting an audacious age. Talk about babies being a trouble; they're nothing. It's girls and boys of fourteen and fifteen, they're the trouble. They are a never-ceasing care then."

"A governess for the girls and a school for the boys set all anxiety at rest, surely, does it not?" said Mrs. Deane, smiling.

"Good gracious! no. A good mother's anxiety is never at rest. Find me a governess fit to have the care of girls, or a school where boys will not learn more harm than good, and I'll agree with you. Governesses, indeed—I've had enough of them. I teach my girls [myself, and my boys go to the clergyman's for five hours a day. A mother, you may depend, is the only fit person to have charge of her children."

"It depends greatly on what sort of a mother she is, don't you think, Mrs. Warleigh?" said Mrs. Deane. "I know some mothers who would not make very good instructors of youth."

"The instances are very rare, Mrs. Deane, in which the mother is unfit to manage her own children; at least, that is my experience. Better be taught nothing by a mother, than wickedness by a governess."

"Well, you see, I am fortunate. I have an excellent governess."

"Umph! I'm glad you think so. You ought to teach them yourself; you have nothing else to do."

"Mrs. Warleigh!" answered Mrs. Deane, laughing good temperedly, "why, I have not an idle moment."

"No, indeed," chimed in Lady Maudesley. "I assure you, our dear friend is indefatigable. It fatigues me to look at her sometimes."

"Then may I ask the object of your keeping a governess to do your work, and employing yourself with other people's?"

"What do you call other people's work?"

"Why, stitching for the poor, which I know occupies a great part of your time. Let them stitch for themselves."

"But many of them can't."

"Then the sooner they learn the better. You should not encourage them in their idleness. Good

gracious! there's Arabella in the garden without anything on her head. That's always the way if I take my eyes off from them a moment.—Arabella!" she called from the window, "go in this moment and put your hat on.—Now you see," she continued, when she returned to her seat, "a governess would never have seen that that girl was out without her hat, not she. The moment she had dismissed the girls from the school-room she would think no more of them till school hours again. Then, of course, the mother thinks she is looking after them; and between the two, the girls' minds, healths, and morals are entirely neglected, and they grow up to perpetuate a race of idle, useless, and sickly women."

"Well, I don't know," said Mrs. Deane, rising to go, for she was sure this educational conversation could not possibly interest Lady Maudesley, "but I am inclined to think that a little wholesome neglect does children a great deal of good."

"Dear me, Mrs. Deane, if that's your opinion, it's no use our saying any more."

"No; we must agree to differ, must we not? And so we part—good-bye."

"Good-bye; good-bye, my lady. When you get a family round you, follow my advice."

"Oh, don't mention it. I hope, I'm sure I shall never have any children. I shouldn't have a ghost of a guess what to do with them. I should send them all to the Foundling—fancy!" and laughing her little, silly, meaningless laugh, her ladyship ran down-stairs, and into her carriage; and as she took the white reins from the groom's hand, and touched the ponies lightly with her whip, she threw herself back, exclaiming—

"Oh, my dear creature, what a woman! I should expire in less then a week, if I had to see her every day."

"There's a great deal of good in her notwithstanding," said Mrs. Deane; "but I'm afraid I'm mischievous enough to like to aggravate her, and say what I don't really mean, just to hear what she will say."

"I did not listen to or understand half she was talking about. I only heard a very hard, harsh voice, and a great deal about mothers being always with their children. I do not remember much about my mother. I was educated at a French *pension*, and when I came home, mamma was married to a Captain Finlayson, and seemed as though she had forgotten me, amidst a troup of little Finlaysons;

and they all live together somewhere in Hampshire, now."

Mrs. Deane could have said, Lady Maudesley was only proving Mrs. Warleigh's case, for she was certainly no good specimen of a child brought up without a mother's care; but as she was not of Mrs. Warleigh's opinion, that the truth must always be spoken, she only said—

"Your father died when you were very young then?"

"Oh, yes; he and my old hubby were young men together—fancy! and he said to Sir Charles when he died, look after my little one; and he has, hasn't he?" and the customary little laugh followed her speech.

"Very good care, too," answered Mrs. Deane, "for you look very well, and very happy."

"Oh, yes; I'm sure I have everything I want, only Sir Charles is very fussy. Sometimes, which is rather a bore, he says that Albert Grant, my cousin, mustn't bring his young men friends to dine with me when he's out. Isn't that stupid of him? What would you advise now, dear? Shall I have them in spite of him?—there's no harm, is there?"

"No harm meant, I daresay; but I incline to Sir Charles's opinion, that it is not the thing."

"Isn't it really now,—fancy! Well I'm sure I'm quite willing to be taught, for I really know nothing about such things. People in England think so many things wrong, that it's difficult to know what's right. Oh! I must pull up; there's that dear boy, Hamersfort. I haven't seen him for an age;" and bringing the ponies to a sudden standstill, she held out her well-gloved hand to a young man who hurried towards the carriage the moment it stopped.

"Mrs. Deane, Mr. Hamersfort. You're quite a deserter. It's ages since I saw you," and then ensued a silly conversation, between these two young and equally silly individuals, till Mrs. Deane and the ponies became so fidgetty, that Lady Maudesley said, "Well, come to-morrow and dine, and we can have a long talk. I so want to hear all about Fanny's wedding." And nodding gaily to him, she touched the ponies smartly with her whip, and they were soon cantering rapidly away.

"There now," she said, after a moment or two's silence, "I've asked him to-morrow, and it's Sir Charles's whist night at the club. Well, I can't help it; he shouldn't leave poor little me all alone,

should he? I've got Bessy Innis staying with me. She'll do for old propriety, won't she?"

Mrs. Deane made some indifferent remarks, for she felt provoked with the folly of her companion, which she had never seen so much of before, and was mentally resolving to have as little to do with her as possible, when she said—

"You know I am coming to you on the 19th, don't you?—Mr. Deane asked me."

"No, I did not know it; the invitations are not out yet."

"I know that. He said he should not treat me with any ceremony, he should expect me without a card; so I'm coming."

If Mrs. Deane had had Mrs. Warleigh's courage, she might have said she was very sorry to hear it; but, lacking the will and the courage to say disagreeable things, she only answered,

"Then I need not send you a card. I hope it will be fine; it is such a pretty, gay sight, and dear Francis is so looking forward to it. I think I will ask you to put me out here, I have a visit of condolence to make to an old couple who have lost their boy at sea."

"Oh, certainly. Do you do that sort of thing?"

"What sort of thing?"

"Why, visiting the poor, and that kind of godly work."

Mrs. Deane smiled as she answered (and if there was something of contempt in her smile she might be pardoned),

"I endeavour to show my sympathy for all, be they rich or poor, with whom I am acquainted, and whose joys or sorrows I know of; but if you mean, Do I visit the poor for amusement or employment? I do not. This is the cottage; thank you—good-bye."

"Good-bye. Wednesday next, isn't it?—the cricket, I mean—at three o'clock?"

"Yes, at three. Good-bye." And away she drove, utterly indifferent, nay insensible to the effect her conversation had had on her whom she called her "dear friend."

Mrs. Deane walked up the pretty garden belonging to the cottage, admiring as she went the neatness and order of the little flower-beds, filled with sweet though common flowers, which seem to grow more in abundance, and blossom more luxuriantly in those humble gardens than in those where more labour and expense are bestowed on them—perhaps to compensate them for the want of other pleasures

beyond the reach of their humble means. The door was opened before she knocked; they saw her coming.

The poor old woman seized her hand between her own trembling ones, but though her lips moved they uttered no sound. She drew Mrs. Deane forward into the room, and pointing to the chimney-corner, where the old man sat, his head buried in his hands, she burst into a passionate fit of weeping.

The old man never moved. Mrs. Deane walked up to him, and laying her hand gently on his shoulder, said,

"Thomas, I am come to tell you how sorry we all are."

Simple words, but the tone of sympathy went straight to his heart, and loosened the flood-gates of his tears. Until that moment, since the stunning news of the loss of his son, he had not shed a single tear.

"Oh, ma'am, thank God! thank you and bless you! Oh! it was dreadful to see him so stony. Thomas, it 'll do you good, deary," and the poor old woman put her arms round his neck, and drew his head on her bosom, and stroked his thin grey hair, as many a time she had fondled the flaxen

curls of the boy whose loss they were now mourning.

When both were a little calmer Mrs. Deane drew them to talk of the boy and tell her all the particulars; she knew it would comfort them to do so, and by degrees led them away from the subject to talk of their other children.

"Ah! ma'am, we've had a powerful lot of care with all ourn; some sickly and poor, and some worse than that; and I do think, ma'am, the girls worse than the boys. Our Jane she has been a sight of trouble to us, she has."

"Indeed, has she? She was always with you, I suppose, brought up together with the others was she not?"

"Oh, dear, yes, ma'am; but p'raps she might have bin a thought more humoured than t'others. Father's pet she was. No, do you say, father? Well, p'raps not; he was uncommon fond of all his children, sure, but they don't all turn out comforts."

"Quite true, Anne; but we must do the best we can for them all the same, and then we have nothing to reproach ourselves with."

"All right, ma'am, sure."

"I shall go now," continued Mrs. Deane, "and

I hope you'll both come up and see Mrs. Deane; she never goes out now, but she would like to see you."

"Thank you, ma'am; we'll try and come up Sunday evening after service."

Mrs. Deane shook them both kindly by the hand, and left the cottage, thinking as she walked home of the two visits she had paid, wondering, as she often wondered, what was really right—her own mode with her children, or Mrs. Warleigh's? In one house she had heard how impossible it was for any child to turn out well not continually under the mother's eye, in the other she heard how ill they had turned out who had been thus carefully guarded. Yes, few who knew the elegant and fashionable Mrs. Deane could believe how much her thoughts were with her home and with her children. She made no professions—never talked of such subjects where she could help it, but she thought of it deeply and seriously; and many an hour in grandmamma's room, when the little ones were sleeping, did they talk together of what was best to be done with them. As you have heard, on some points they differed. Grandmamma was for a more homely domestic training; mamma wished their time to be spent in hard learning. She said the rest would come

naturally when they had homes of their own to manage, but that their young days should be spent in acquiring that knowledge which would not come to them so easily. She had chosen, after much trouble, an excessively clever young lady for their governess, for she said she had not been educated herself sufficiently to teach them all she wished them to know, and she also felt that she had no right to give all her time to her children. Her husband had a strong claim on it, she considered; and to order his house aright, keep up a pleasant society for his sake, and that of her children as they grew up, and care for and assist the poor on his little estate, she felt to be paramount duties. Highly recommended to Miss Barton, and liking the delicate, lady-like girl much, she took her at once; and for nearly four years she had now been an inmate of Mrs. Mark Deane's house.

In a large room in this house, called the play-room, May and Carry were at play. May had consented to be Carry's child;—after some coaxing, for she did not like that play at all, as it enforced obedience to Carry's commands, and they were more frequent and irksome than either nurse's or mamma's.

They had gone there to play directly after lunch, because Miss Barton had said she had so much work to do she could not go out, and Jeanie and Lucy were helping her; so the customary long ramble, which generally lasted until tea-time, was given up, and in the large room which was built out at the end of the house (and the walls and floor of which were lined with gutta percha to prevent accidents), the two young children were to amuse themselves during the rest of the afternoon, and then Miss Barton had promised them a walk after tea. May had been Carry's little girl for as long as her patience could stand it, and she was begging for release.

"I 'ant to be a big lady now, Carry; I tiey of being a 'ittle girl."

"Nonsense, May, you can't be a big lady, a little bit of a thing like you; however, I don't want to play with you if you're so grumbly. I can read."

"Nurse used to play I was a big lady."

"Ah! nurse spoilt you. It was a good thing when she went; mamma said so."

"Well, Hannah plays I is a big lady, and lets me have on her hoop and her fock."

"Then you'd better go and play with Hannah, for I don't like such silly play;" and throwing

herself in a little chair at the end of the room, she took up a book and began to read. Little May stood still a moment watching her; then she said,

"I wish mamma had dot another ittle baby, then she wouldn't have sent away dear nurse, and then she could play with me like she used."

"I thought you said Hannah played with you."

"So she does, but not often; tos see hasn't time see says."

"Well, look here, May," said Carry, jumping up with a sudden thought, "I'll play with you every day, and let you be a big lady for a week, if you 'll go in the school-room now and fetch me that book you were looking at in Miss Barton's lap, the one you said there were funny things in: don't you know?"

"Oh! yes, I know."

"I don't think Miss Barton's there; if she is, say you wanted to see it, but don't say I sent you; if you do, I won't play with you, and I won't wait for you to go in the garden, but always run right up to the top without you."

This was a thing which, for some reason, poor little May greatly disliked, and she would do any-

thing for the promise to "wait for her when they went in the garden."

She started off now, according to her sister's wish, to get the book. The school-room was empty, the things all put away, and nothing was on the table but Miss Barton's desk. The little girl stood on tip-toe and peered all round, but no "funny" book could she see, and so she ran back to Carry to state the uselessness of her errand.

"You're sure it was not anywhere there?" asked Carry.

"Quite sure; but you will play with me and wait for me, tause I tould not make it be there, tould I?"

"No, all right."

"And may I be a big lady now?"

"Yes, but first of all go and ask if Miss Barton's out? Graham will know, perhaps, or Hannah. I'll give you a sugar-plum when you come back."

Away ran the little maiden, and soon returned with the information that Miss Barton had just gone out with mamma. Mamma had come in from her drive, and had taken Miss Barton out, Lucy told her so. Lucy was at work with Jeanie in grandmamma's room. She met her on the stairs; she'd been to fetch something. "Now, where's the sugar-plum?"

"Here it is," said Carry, producing one from her pocket, "and now, if you'll go up in my room and wait there, I'll come and dress you up."

Well satisfied with this arrangement May started off, and Carry waited till the sound of the little pattering footsteps had ceased; then stealing cautiously from the play-room, she made her way with stealthy rapid steps to the school-room, and closing the door softly she went to the table, and drawing a small key on a piece of ribbon from her pocket, she put it into the lock of the desk; it turned easily, and with a trembling hand Carry hastily opened it and removed the journal, which lay there as she suspected; then, with her face pale and anxious, and her heart beating with a new terror, the child closed and locked the desk, and hurried to her own room: there she found May ready to cry, because Carry had been "so long."

Carry, unseen by the child, slipped the book in a drawer, and then took the greatest pains to dress her up as she wished. It would have been a pretty subject for an artist, that mimic toilet—the little fairy child with its golden hair being twisted up with combs; the long skirt and hoop covering her round, sturdy little limbs, and her own delighted

face in the glass, as her sister thus transformed her and finished her adornment with bunches of scarlet geranium fastened in her hair. She "was a big lady" now, a grand lady too; but she was afraid "Dolly" would not know her—that was her only concern. Would Carry take her up to the nursery? for she should fall in that long train, and then she could tell "Dolly" who she was. And so Carry took the little creature in her masquerade up-stairs, and introduced her formally to "Dolly" and Hannah, and then on some excuse left her, and running back to her room,—the room she shared with Jeanie,—she entered it, and locked and bolted the door.

The Big Lady's Toilet.

CHAPTER III.

THE long-looked-for 19th arrived at last. Francis came home two days before, and was as noisy and troublesome as any boy just come from school might be expected to be. Two young lads from the school came with him to play on the 19th, and of course there was endless talk about cricket; all the matches they had had or seen were talked over; incessant were the discussions as to the best bowler, the mistakes of the umpires, who are always wrong with the persons they give "out," the merit of each batsman, and the scores they had themselves made in different matches.

The morning of the match, Francis' birthday too, the young people were all astir an hour earlier than common; the boys running up and down stairs fifty times with no ostensible object, but from a restless desire to be doing something. Jeanie had insisted on their "eleven" wearing colours

and one great subject of discussion was what colour it should be; blues must not be dreamed of, as some of the players were Eton, some Harrow, some had Oxford tendencies, and some Cambridge; so it was finally decided to be cherry-coloured, which would hurt nobody's feelings; and to pin these on the white cricketing coats was to be Carry's business—dear little May was to hold them and the pins, and so consider that she "helped" amazingly. Of course it was a holiday, and Mrs. Mark Deane had kindly said to Miss Barton that the carriage should take her home if she liked, or she could remain, of course, and see the match, if she preferred doing so. She had chosen the former, and so at half-past ten the carriage came, and drove her to her home—a very humble one; no inmates but a widowed mother and old servant, on a pretty picturesque common about ten miles distant. A carrier's van came within a short walk of Mrs. Deane's place the next morning, and so it was agreed for her to return by that, and so prolong her holiday. The strange rare smile lighted her face as she got into the carriage and kissed her hand to little May standing on the steps to watch her off. She did not see another face, pale and anxious, peeping

behind the school-room blind, and watching till the carriage had driven down the avenue and through the gates and its sound had died away in the distance.

"Carry—Carry, where are you?" called Jeanie. "The boys are all waiting for you to pin on the bows. What are you doing?"

"Here I am, Jeanie," and Carry came out of the school-room, and ran quickly down to the bottom of the stairs, where Jeanie was waiting for her.

"What have you been doing? Do come. Where are the rosettes? The boys are in a fever."

"I have them. Which room are the boys in?"

"The library. Come along—May's there."

They entered the room together, and there stood the "eleven," looking fit to be photographed, in their flannels, with their bats in their hands, and sweet little May seated on the knee of one of them, who was, as she said, her own "darling, beauty boy."

The boys all rose as Jeanie and Carry entered; so, as little Miss May had to be displaced from her "comfy" seat, she consoled herself by holding and kissing his hand.

"Here come the rosettes," said Francis, "at last. Come along. What an age you've been!"

"There's plenty of time, Francis," said Carry. "You don't begin till eleven."

"Well, but it don't want much to eleven, and we've got to pitch the stumps."

"Well—now May, hold the pins."

Unwillingly loosing her hold of the dear hand, May took the pins, and whispered to Carry to put the "beautiest" on Everard.

This business satisfactorily accomplished, the boys rushed off, and the girls went to get ready, as they intended to watch the game from the commencement. The match was the Village Club against Master Francis' "eleven." There were some good rough cricketers amongst the Club, good hard hitters and steady straight bowlers; but much more agreeable was it to watch the beautiful play of the boys. The neat fielding, the pretty style of the batting, combined with their effective dresses, of course entirely enlisted the ladies on their side; but there were winsome-looking lasses enough, too, whose good wishes were with the Club, and who, in the after-part of the day, came up dressed in their best, to look on at them, and cheer with their smiles

their favourite players. Amongst the gentlemen players Francis Deane was decidedly the handsomest, but Hugh Everard was the favourite of the fair sex of all ages and sizes; children worshipped him, and he might always be seen with one or more on his shoulder. Wherever he might be, if there was a child in the house, however remote the nursery might be, he discovered it, and was friends with the little inmate in no time. He always kept a store of sugar-plums to tempt the little shy ones, but it was the little girls who were his great pets, and the greatest of all was golden-haired May. No Valentine's day ever passed without "a large, lovely letter," as she called it, being sent to her; no birthday, since he had known the tiny maiden, ever passed without a parcel arriving for "Miss May Deane," who rewarded the donor by nearly strangling him with kisses the moment she saw him. Gravely had she assured him that he must marry her as soon as ever she was "a big young lady," and never for a moment did she doubt the truth of his promise to do so. It might not be that Hugh Everard was any better than other boys: doubtless he was often troublesome and unruly, hated work with a natural hatred, and called those, behind their backs, hard

names, who controlled or contradicted him, for he was human and a boy, and full of human frailties and boy's follies. But he had that charm so powerful to win hearts, grace of manner; polite, thoughtful, attentive to ladies and the aged of both sexes; gaiety with those of his own age and sex; a good humour which stood any amount of raillery; and a tenderness and playfulness with little children which, as I have said, made the little ones worship him, and their mothers vote him, without exception, the nicest boy of their acquaintance. Many who were jealous of the praise he so universally earned, would have been glad to condemn him with that dreadful accusation, that he was a "muff" and a "sap," but they could not have this satisfaction when they found him first and foremost at every game and manly sport, and so were fain to content themselves with a shrug of the shoulders, and an assurance that they "did not see anything so very particular about him."

The cricket ground was a very pretty one, and the large tent raised for dinner, with a coloured flag flying at both ends, smaller ones of scarlet cloth to mark the ground, and the little tents dotted about, with the ladies in their gay dresses, gave life and brightness to the scene. The day was

glorious, made on purpose, as people said, "and all went merry as a marriage bell." The Club went in first, and Francis had the luck to catch out their very best players, so that by dinner-time their wickets were all down, and the gentlemen-players were to go in directly after. About half-past three carriages began to assemble on the ground, and the excitement became excessive; loud cheers and plaudits from the ladies rang through the silent summer air, mingled with the excited cries of "run it out," "well bowled," "well hit." Francis was on his mettle, and played his best; but when their innings was over, it was Hugh Everard who carried his bat out after scoring forty, raising his cap gracefully in acknowledgment of the loud and prolonged applause from little hands in the ladies' tent.

"Isn't he handsome?" asked Jeanie of a young lady next her.

"Do you mean young Everard?"

"Yes, of course I do; bless him!"

"Oh, Jeanie, for shame!" giggled the young lady. "I don't think he's half as handsome as your brother."

"Ah! dear old Francis is very good-looking, but

there's something about Everard that's better than handsome; he's like nobody else. I don't know that I mean he's handsome when I say so, but his face is so dear."

"Jeanie, you really must be in love with him."

Jeanie's face grew scarlet as she rose and said—

"Hush! Annie, pray. Mamma would be so angry if she heard you. She says she hates us to talk that sort of nonsense."

"Well, does she allow you to rave about young men, then?"

"Young men, Annie! Everard's a dear boy we've known all our lives. I love him like Francis. Oh, here he comes! I'm glad of that. I want to know the score." And Jeanie, glad to get away from her companion, moved away to where she saw Francis and two or three of the boys.

Lady Maudesley had professed the most intense interest in the game; but her little voluble tongue had been running the whole time, and she had so provoked Lucy and Jeanie with her silly remarks, that they had been most delighted when they had to make room for other ladies, and could get away from her; but her delight was by no means so great when she found Mrs. Warleigh was seated beside her.

"Charming game this, Mrs. Warleigh, is it not?" she said.

"I don't see anything charming in it, for I don't understand it. I only came because my boys are playing, and Mrs. Deane asked me."

"Oh, I don't understand it in the least," said Lady Maudesley, "myself, but still I like to see them running about, and seeming so merry; and I always clap my hands, and make a tremendous noise when the others do, though I haven't the least idea what for—fancy!"

"Well, I shouldn't have exerted myself without knowing what for, if I'd been you," said Mrs. Warleigh, sharply. "Do you know if my boys have been playing well?"

"Oh, no, that I don't; because, you see, I don't know what is playing well—what they are supposed to do. Some of them have been throwing up the ball as high as they possibly could, and others have been trying to stand on their heads, and some have been running as hard as they could, and they've all been doing something different, and very amusing; but whether it was well done or not, I can't say."

With a gesture of impatience, Mrs. Warleigh rose, and went to inquire of Jeanie if she knew what

her boys had done. At this moment, leaning on her son's arm, and followed by her maid carrying a shawl and folding-chair, Mrs. Deane was seen slowly advancing from the house. The ladies all rose as she approached, and eagerly offered to place her chair in the best place, where the sun should not be too hot, or the breeze too strong. Sweet was the smile with which she greeted them all, and wonderful the grace and tact with which she addressed a pleasant word to each. She understood the game, and watched it with the greatest interest, her hands folded on her gold-headed stick, and her eyes fixed on the players. Especially was she delighted with her dear boy, Francis. He was a great favourite of the old lady's, and she loved to see him doing well whatever he undertook. She often told him that a good player was always a good worker, and that she respected all persons who obeyed the text, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

"That's the fifth wicket down, hurrah!" said Jeanie. "Grandma, dear, we shall win."

"I hope so, dearie; the young folks would be so disappointed if they did not."

"Eversard's doed best," said little May, with delight, utterly regardless of grammar.

"Ah! but Francis has played famously, too," said Lucy, who thought her brother everything that was good and clever.

"And my boys?" asked Mrs. Warleigh. "What have they done? I asked that little silly woman, and she knew nothing about it."

"I don't know the individual scores; but we heard the boys say, that Everard had the largest."

"Ah! well, I hope they've done their best, and then I don't care. Annabella, do pray sit more out of the sun, you'll be as brown as a berry."

"I don't care," muttered the young lady, but backing her seat as she was ordered.

"What do you say?"

"Nothing, mamma.—I wish she wouldn't keep bothering me so," she whispered to Jeanie. "She's always going on—your mamma doesn't."

"No, bless her; my mother's one in a thousand. We ought all to think so of our mothers, oughtn't we?" said Jeanie, correcting herself quickly, as she thought, perhaps, she had hurt Annabella's feelings.

"Don't you think we had better go in, Jeanie," whispered Lucy, "and see about the tea and coffee?"

"Oh! I don't know; Saunders will get it of course, that will be all right."

"Yes, but I mean to receive the people as they come in."

"Oh, mamma will do that. I do so want to see the end of the match."

"Very well, Jeanie. I shall go, because I know mamma wants to stay too to see the end of the match, and if she knows one of us is in doors, she won't come in."

"Well, but Lucy, won't every one stay till the end?"

"Oh, no; lots of people don't care a fig about it —Lady Maudesley for one. Good-bye! I'm going."

"Oh, dear, what an awfully good Lucy you are!" sighed Jeanie, as her sister moved away, and she turned her eager gaze again to the game.

As Lucy predicted, she was soon followed into the house by several ladies, amongst them Lady Maudesley; and when, some short time afterwards, Mrs. Deane came in, Lucy was amply rewarded by the smile which greeted her, and the whispered words—

"You good little woman! I wondered what all these people were doing in doors, and I didn't like

to leave the rest, besides a great wish to see the end of the match, I must own, too."

"Who has won, mamma?"

"Oh, the boys, I'm glad to say; but it was a close match—most interesting. Hugh's play has been wonderful. They were talking of chairing him round the village when I came away."

"Dear Everard, I'm so glad. Where are the girls?"

"Here they come."

"Oh, Lucy, dear, such a match!—glorious! I'm perfectly exhausted with excitement. Give me a cup of tea, there's an angel," said Jeanie, flinging herself down in the first chair she came to.

"Did you say the boys had won?" asked Mrs. Warleigh.

"Yes. Here come your two sons; shall I call them in?"

"Thank you, yes. They would like some tea, perhaps."

"There is claret-cup, soda-water, and beer on that sideboard, which the boys will probably like better. Send all in you can see, Adelaide," said Mr. Deane, as Mrs. Deane stepped through the open windows on to the lawn, and as soon as the pleasant

summons was communicated to the thirsty players, they eagerly flocked in.

"You'd better have some tea, boys," said Mrs. Warleigh, coming up to two rather clumsy, heavy-looking fellows, who had gone to the sideboard with Everard and Francis and several others.

"Oh, no, ma, must we?" they asked, pleadingly.

Mrs. Deane came to the rescue.

"They have had a great deal of exertion, and it's very warm; I think it won't hurt them," she said.

"Oh, very well, they can do as they like," said Mrs. Warleigh; "but they're not accustomed to such things."

The boys looked at her with anything but a grateful glance at this remark, as they perceived a sly glance of amusement pass between Everard and Francis; and as soon as they had drank what Mrs. Deane poured out for them, they whispered to another boy to come out again, glad to get away from their mother and her, to them, annoying vigilance. The rest soon ran after them, and were soon deep in a game at bowls, whilst the ladies sat about inspecting them, or chatting under the trees by the river until the first little star shot forth, and the round, red harvest moon came up slowly and grandly into

the cloudless sky. Then the inviting sounds of a cornet lured them to the house, and soon they were dancing to an excellent band, which Mrs. Deane had procured from town, as energetically as though they had had no exertion all day. Little May was to wait up, just to see one dance, and then, as an immense treat, to have a custard and sponge-cake in grandmamma's room, with some ginger-wine to drink Francis' health: for the evening gaiety was too much for grandmamma, and she had sought the refuge of her own room. This delightful treat had of course been duly communicated to Everard by little May; so just as, perched on a high stool beside dear granny, she was beginning to eat her supper, the maid arrived with a message from Mr. Everard, to know if he might be allowed to come too. With a pleasant smile, grandmamma assented, and the high stool was soon exchanged for Everard's knee, and the pleasant smile of approval and amusement never left grandmamma's kind face whilst her visitors were with her. It was so charming to see the way in which Everard brought himself down to the child's mind, appeared so deeply interested in what she was pleased with, and finally, when he found how thoroughly weary she was, and yet how

unwilling, like all tired children, to go to bed, the tact with which he told some wonderful tale, which lured her from the toys grandmamma had given her, till the little tired head fell on his shoulder, and the long lashes veiled the blue eyes, and she was willingly borne in his kind, tender arms to her nursery door, and given up to Hannah.

It may be thought very manly, and quite the thing, to call children hard names—"little wretches," "horrid little brats," &c.; but there is a better manliness, more akin to godliness, which takes the little ones tenderly in its arms, and ever speaks gently to and of those whom the Best who ever trod the earth was not ashamed to own He loved.

Everard, on his return to the dancing-room, soon found a partner, and the evening passed gaily away, all declaring it had been a most successful day, and the hero himself thoroughly satisfied.

CHAPTER IV.

And poor Miss Barton, how was she passing her holiday? The contrast between hers and her pupils' was very great, but it was very, very peaceful, and but for a weight at her heart, which made all things to her sad and gloomy, it would have been all she wished—rest from teaching, rest from the constant strain on her attention, and the companionship of her dear old mother, whom she tenderly loved, and whom she grieved to be compelled to leave. Exquisitely clean was the little cottage. In front, growing on a little piece of turf exactly facing it, and close to the little garden fence, were two poplars —and so, of course, named Poplar Cottage—the rustling of their leaves in the summer time having a cool and pleasant sound, and affording a delightful shade to the front rooms. The garden was very tiny, but that was of no consequence; for, as the old lady said, there was the beautiful common, covered

with heath and furze, to walk in, as though it was her own park, so she did not want much garden. The little piece she had, she could keep herself tidy, with her maid's help, and a man every now and then to dig it up and fresh gravel the small paths,—those small paths in which children delighted when they came to see her, and would walk round and in amongst them with much more glee than in broad gravel ones in nobler gardens. She was weeding it and tying up some carnations, when the sound of carriage wheels aroused her attention, and with an exclamation of joy the old lady threw away tools and gardening gloves, to clasp in her arms her darling Margaret.

"Not going back again to-night!" she exclaimed, as the little carpet-bag was lifted from the carriage. "Oh, I am glad, dear child!" And she led her into the little shady parlour, and removed her bonnet and shawl, and kissed her again and again on the "brown satin wig," as she always called her daughter's beautiful glossy hair, and asked so many questions in her great joy and excitement, that Miss Barton could not answer them all.

Then the old servant was called to speak to her, and she came, her arms and hands covered with flour

from the pudding she was making, too much in haste to see her dear young lady to wait and wash them, but she dusted the flour from them in her clean white apron, because Miss Barton would shake hands with her.

"Come up to your own room, dear, and put yourself comfortable for dinner. We dine as usual at one, dear. You can eat a homely dinner with your old mother, can't you?"

"Mother, dear, of course I can."

"Come along, then."

"You need not trouble to come up, mother. I can find my way to my dear little room."

"Very well, dear, I'm glad to save myself the stairs when I can, but don't be long, for I want to see your dear face all I can," and so, while her daughter was upstairs, she went to finish her job in the garden, and put away the things, for she was very tidy, orderly, and methodical, or her cottage would not have been the little pattern it was, like a child's new doll's house. The moment Miss Barton was in her room she closed the door, and sinking down beside the bed buried her face in the coverlet, and wept as though her heart were breaking, but the sound of her mother's voice below

roused her to exert herself, and with an effort she restrained the sad sobs, tried to wash from her face the traces of tears, and brushing her hair very smoothly she went down with as cheerful a countenance as she could assume; but a mother's eye few can deceive,—she saw the sad face; and as soon as dinner was over, and the cloth cleared, she sat down beside her, and gently taking her hand, she said,

"Margaret, love, the old story."

It was enough, the full heart could bear no more; dropping her head on her mother's shoulder, the tears burst forth again, and she sobbed out,

"Yes, mother, the old story, ever the old never-to-be-forgotten story."

"Can you not learn to forget, my poor darling?"

"No, mother, and a fresh trouble has arisen. I have, I fear, betrayed myself by my own imprudence."

"My child, how?"

"I have kept a journal for many years, and I left it accidentally on the school-room table; you would never dream that young ladies would touch it, but on my return to the room I found some of the fly leaves full of drawings, illustrating what was written. They must have read it through; how could they

have failed to discover my secret? I shall then have to leave, and what will become of you, poor mother?"

"Hush, hush! my dear girl; why be so distressed? Even if it is found out, it is not your fault; surely if Mrs. Deane is as nice as you say, she will never visit it on you."

"Ah! mother, ladies are so particular about not being mixed up with anything,—that is why I did not mention it at first; no, I have been thinking it would be better to give notice myself as soon as I return, and spare all disagreeables. If it was not for you, and the fear that I might not get another situation, and so make you suffer, I would really."

"No, no, dear, don't be hasty; not that I'm thinking of myself. God forbid I should be so selfish; but you are better off there, better fed and kept than you could be at home, though we might manage just to live on my little pension; but do not be in haste to leave; they may not have read anything you wish not known, and if they have, would probably be afraid to tell their mother. Wait a while, dear, wait a while! Thank God you have a home to come to, such as it is, if they turn you

out night or day, and a mother that loves and is prouder of you than if you were a queen," and the poor old lady kissed with actual reverence the little hand clasped in hers, and wiped the tears from her own eyes.

They were both silent for a time, and then Miss Barton said,

"It is a shame to come to your cheerful home and make it dull like this. I am very naughty; let us go and take a walk, and drive away these dismals."

"Certainly, love; I generally take a stroll myself after dinner," and so, arm in arm, these two gentle-hearted women wandered together over the common among the sweet-scented heather, and through the lanes where the trees met overhead, and the hedges bore traces of the golden burdens which had been carried through them, and wild flowers in abundance grew beside the path, and birds twittered among the branches overhead busily, and grasshoppers chirped loudly, and a bee heavily laden with its sweet burden went humming slowly by. Only these pleasant sounds to be heard, save, perhaps, a child's voice, at play in the meadows, as it followed its father at his work.

Presently they came in sight of the church, and

then a slight convulsive shudder seemed to run through Miss Barton's frame, and she grasped her mother's arm more tightly.

"We will turn," said Mrs. Barton, softly; "I did not mean to come this way."

Miss Barton made no answer but a sigh, and turned away with her mother in the opposite direction.

The evening passed away more brightly. She made a great effort to be cheerful for her mother's sake, and it was so pleasant to have nothing to do but sit by the open window with the little tea-table drawn up beside it, and look out across the common to the lovely view beyond in the soft hazy light of evening, here and there in the distant landscape seeing glittering specks, like pieces of burnished gold, which was the setting sun gleaming on the panes of glass in some farm-house among the hills, —watching the geese strutting along in a line, and occasionally turning to hiss, with long outstretched necks, at a little urchin who had flung stones at them,—the rough donkeys standing with noses together, perfectly contented to do nothing else,—the groups of little children playing amongst the heather with headless dolls and bits of tile and brick to do duty for cups and saucers: one child considering

herself grand as the squire's lady, with a parasol, of which nothing was left but the canes, underneath which she strutted about, swinging her little patched old frock with all the airs imaginable,—then the rector passed slowly along, speaking kindly to the little folks, his hands folded behind his back, as it was his custom to walk, thinking doubtless of his sermon ;—and poor sad Margaret Barton sat at the open window looking at all this with a dreamy sense of pleasure, not perhaps so much connected with the objects themselves, but with some bygone associations with happy days gone by.

She felt more than she had ever done since she first left home, going away again, and dreaded the arrival of the queer-looking shaky conveyance — termed by the villagers the van—more than she liked to acknowledge even to herself. She was up very early the next morning, long before her mother was astir, and putting on her bonnet she softly left the house and wended her steps towards the church. It was a beautiful old church, with a lych-gate and fine yew tree growing near the porch. The graveyard was beautifully kept, the rector encouraging the people to erect pretty crosses in memory of their lost ones;

some of the poorest had simple wooden crosses, with creepers growing over them; the turf was kept mown, and the paths weeded and gravelled, so that it looked indeed a tempting resting-place in which to lay their lost ones.

Margaret Barton walked on until she came to a very small grave, with a cross, on which was inscribed, "Eva Bridgenorth, born May the 10th, 1861, died July 12th, 1861." Nothing more, but enough for her who knelt before it, — enough to make the bitter tears fall thick and fast, and the sad sobs shake her frame; she scarcely knew how long she knelt there, but voices and footsteps at length aroused her: it was the sexton and his boy going to ring the bell for the early service. She rose, and snatching hastily a few "Forget-me-nots" from the grave, which she placed in her bosom, she hurried home. Her mother asked her no questions, she guessed where she had been; she only pressed her to eat her breakfast, and when the van came to the door held her tenderly in her arms, and whispered, "God bless and comfort you in His good time," and watched her away through her blinding tears till she could see her no longer, and the lumbering sound of the van had died away in the distance.

CHAPTER V.

THE next morning, after their gaiety, the young ladies found it difficult to rise at their usual time, and the maid had several times to assure them it was half-past seven before they felt inclined to acknowledge the fact; but it was one of Mrs. Deane's stringent rules that the girls should rise at the same hour, as though they had not been late the night before, and go to bed earlier the next evening if they pleased. Carry was half-dressed before Jeanie had thought of rising, and Lucy was down-stairs making the breakfast, with flowers all cut and arranged for the table as usual.

"Carry, you never mean you're just dressed. I believe I've been to sleep again."

"I know you have. I kept calling you, but you wouldn't wake. Lucy's been down this half hour, cutting flowers."

"You don't mean it? However, that's just like

Lucy; as I always tell her, she's painfully good. And I say, Carry, it's Giuglietto's morning, and I haven't finished my translation. Really, he ought not to come the morning after a ball. I shan't know a word I'm saying. By the bye, what ailed you, Carry, yesterday? I don't believe you enjoyed yourself a bit, you looked so absent and dull all day."

"Did I?" answered Carry; and she turned away from Jeanie's gaze, for a bright blush covered her face.

"Yes, you did. What was the matter?"

"Nothing at all; it must have been your fancy."

"It wasn't my fancy alone, for two or three people remarked it — Mrs. Warleigh particularly. She had all sorts of remarks to make; that you did not get walks enough, and were over-taught by your clever governess, and I don't know what all."

"Oh, she always talks a lot of nonsense. There was nothing the matter with me. Oh, Jeanie, there goes the prayer bell. I'm ready: I shall go."

"Run on," said Jeanie. "I must bring my two-pence for the alms'-box with me, for I can't do it if I dress at ever such a pace."

When Jeanie came down, all the family were seated at breakfast.

"Ah, Jeanie," said her father, "late, of course."

"Darling, I was so sleepy," she said, kissing the top of her father's bald head, which she said always looked so shiny and tempting, as though it was made to kiss.

"Well, take your place, now, and make up for lost time."

Somehow, Jeanie was a great darling of her father's. She could not remember his ever giving her a cross word, and she loved him with a passionate, almost idolatrous love. Sometimes the girls would chat amongst themselves about getting married, but Jeanie's answer was always, "When I find any one like papa, I shall marry, not before; and as I don't believe there's another like him in the world, I shall be the old maid of the family."

"Do you remember it is Giuglietto's morning, Jeanie?" asked Mrs. Deane, as she handed Jeanie her coffee.

"Yes, mamma, I remember it painfully."

"Because you are not ready for him, I suppose?"

"Yes, mamma."

"Dear, dear, my child, you are very idle. Are you ready, Lucy?"

"Yes, mamma, dear, quite."

"Good girl. Does not Miss Barton think Carry able to begin Italian this half?"

"No, mamma," she said; "Carry was so backward with her French, that she must not think of beginning until next half," answered Lucy.

"Where is Miss Barton, by the bye?" asked Mr. Deane.

"I gave her leave to go home from yesterday until to-day, dear. I thought she looked pale and harassed."

"But she's only just recommenced her duties. They've been keeping holiday while Francis has been at home, have they not?"

"Oh, yes. I don't think it is teaching that's fagged her. It is some private anxiety, I fancy. Why, Carry, what's the matter?—choking, child?"

"The tea was hot, mamma."

"Well, it's made your face hot, little woman, anyhow," said her father. "Give her some more milk in it, mamma."

"Oh, Francis, how can you say so!" exclaimed Jeanie, in answer to some remark of her brother's. "Mamma, Francis says Lady Maudesley's charming."

"Well, my dear, he may think so, if he likes, may he not?"

"Yes; but what taste!"

"Well, come, Jeanie, is not she nicer than Mrs. Warleigh?"

Jeanie laughed, as she answered, "Well, I don't know. Mrs. Warleigh is honest and truthful, and of some use in the world, and that's more than we can say of Lady Maudesley."

"Gently, Jeanie, you can't prove that. Everything and everybody has its use. If she is only an example to prevent you being as silly as herself, she is of use."

"Silly, mother?" said her champion, Francis. "I don't see that she's silly a bit; she's awful fun. I don't call her half so silly as those Mason girls, who only giggle when one speaks to them, and never answer. She's always got lots to say."

"Such as it is," said Jeanie.

"Come, come, Miss Jeanie," said her father, "don't be hard on Lady Maudesley; she's rather a pet of mine."

"Oh, papa!"

"She's very pretty, and has rather engaging manners, though she may not be so clever and learned a lady as Jeanie Deane."

"There are not many who arrive at that eminence, are there, dad?"

"Jeanie, eat your breakfast, and don't chatter so. You said you were not ready for your master; make haste and go."

"Let the poor child have enough to eat, mamma; give her another slice of roll."

"No, thank you, papa, dear; I've nearly done. Oh! here's Everard coming across the lawn. He's not knocked up with yesterday."

"What can he want so early? Call him in here, Francis," said Mr. Deane.

Francis rose, and going through the open window on to the lawn, brought Everard in again with him.

"I am disturbing you. I could have waited in the garden quite well," he said.

"No, no, my boy, we've done; it's only my daughter Jeanie here, who is going steadily on till lunch, I suppose."

"What a shame, papa. I've finished," said Jeanie, jumping up.

"I came to know if Francis would go fishing with me, and come back to dinner with us."

"It is his last day," said Mrs. Deane, wistfully.

"Oh, that's no matter," replied Mr. Deane,

"boys don't think of such things; besides, poor chap, if it is his last day, he ought to enjoy it; and you may depend he will a great deal more with Everard than at home here. What say you, Francis?"

"Oh, sir, if my mother wishes."

"No, no," interrupted Mrs. Deane. "Go, by all means, if you like, dear."

"I'll go to the fishing, and come back to dinner then."

"Very well, that will compromise the matter very nicely. Perhaps grandmamma will like that arrangement better. Then off with you—don't keep Everard waiting."

"Come, Carry; come and help me get my tackle."

Carry acted as Francis' fag when he was at home; and she did not object to it. He was a kind master, who paid liberally for her services; and, moreover, Carry's tendencies were slightly boyish. She had from her babyhood preferred boys' toys, and boys' amusements, and took such a thorough interest in them, that she was naturally a great favourite with Francis, who declared she was almost as good as another brother.

"Can I do anything for you, mamma, dear?" asked Lucy, when she had put away the tea and sugar, and restored the keys to their little basket.

"No, love; nothing, I think. What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to grandmamma first, and by that time Giuglietto will be here."

"Will he be here before Miss Barton gets back?"

"I almost think he will."

"Then let me know when he comes, and I will bring my work into the schoolroom."

"Yes, mamma," and Lucy went quietly to grandmamma's room, taking fresh flowers with her for the vase in the sitting-room, which she never forgot to do all the summer long, and for which she was repaid by dear grandmamma's delight and reiterated thanks. To arrange and gather the flowers for all the rooms, Lucy made her own occupation, and she never forgot or neglected it; whatever amusement was on foot, whatever interesting occupation she had to do, the flowers were never forgotten. She rose an hour earlier, or in some way contrived that they should be done. It was singular in so young a girl—her unvarying fulfilment of every duty she undertook; and the strong feeling she had of the

imperative necessity to do what she had undertaken, made her cautious of promising more than she felt sure she could fulfil. Obedient, truthful, dutiful, and affectionate, what was there in Lucy which made her less a favourite than the wild, ill-disciplined Jeanie? Simply a manner, which though quite innocent, gave an impression that she considered herself better than all others. She really could not endure or be amused with silly frivolous talk; and she felt she could not help trying to check it. She could not bear to see girls wasting their time when she knew duties were awaiting them, and could not help reminding them of it. In short, good and dutiful herself, she saw no reason why any one else should not be good and dutiful too; why the duties required each day should not be done, or what difficulty there could be in preparing studies, in practising, working, or any of the occupations which fill up a young girl's time—they had to be done, why not do them? She could see nothing irksome or difficult in obeying her father and mother, or any of those "put in authority over her." What, she would argue, is so easy as to obey? To her gentle nature it was easy; with her quiet temperament, "to do all things, decently and in order,"

was easy; to speak the whole truth, having no wrong to conceal, was easy; and to her unimpassioned nature, to love all who belonged to her, without questioning their merits, was easy too.

Not so her sister Jeanie. Full of warmth and excitement, she loved, as I have said, almost idolatrously, those she did love; but had no idea of wasting this passionate love and admiration, simply because they were her relatives. Lucy's argument, "of course I love papa and mamma, and grandmamma, and all of you, and my uncle and aunts, because I'm related to them," Jeanie could not see. She loved people, "she knew not why," she said, "but because I do, and not a bit because they belong to me. I think that's all humbug. Do you think if Uncle Dick was a cross, grumpy, disagreeable old thing, instead of being a regular darling, almost as great a darling as papa, that I should love him? Not I—not a bit. No more would you, Lucy, in your heart, only you'd think it 'goody' to say so."

Yes, it was this impression which deprived Lucy of the love her real goodness deserved. The impression that she was doing all things to be praised, and that the constant correction of her sisters, in which she seemed to delight, was to show off her

own superiority, not as it really was, her anxiety that they should do right. If they were ever in trouble or punishment, Lucy invariably went to plead for them, helped them with difficult exercises, and was kindness itself to them, they could not but admit; still she was not the general favourite. Jeanie never serious, Jeanie always in scrapes, always ready for fun and mischief, and whom it was impossible to scold, for she stopped their mouths with kisses when they attempted it,—Jeanie was the darling amongst the young ones. Mrs. Deane was most particular to make no favourite, but still she could not help feeling in her heart a more tender love towards the child who was always obedient and loving to her, and who fulfilled every duty with such scrupulous exactness; so that she and grandmamma were always ready to support Lucy when discussions arose about the children, and the majority of votes were given in favour of Jeanie. Miss Barton had borne testimony to Lucy's goodness; but she saw the one prevailing fault which marred it all, and strove in her gentle way to correct it.

The Italian master arrived before the van reached Oatlands, and so Mrs. Deane was at work in the schoolroom, when Miss Barton entered it.

"I beg your pardon," she began. "I was sure I should be late."

"Don't mention it, Miss Barton, you could not get here before the van, and now you must take some luncheon after your long drive, before you come up here. Run away, I will keep guard till you return."

"You are very kind; but I really could not eat anything."

"You will compel me to come down and feed you, if you don't at any rate go and order yourself a sandwich and a glass of sherry," said Mrs. Deane, kindly. She liked Miss Barton so much, and was grieved to see her pale, distressed face. It seemed so ungracious to refuse, that Miss Barton did as Mrs. Deane wished her, but returned to the school-room as quickly as she could, and in time to receive the master's instructions for the work to be prepared by the next lesson, and to hear his report of her pupils. As usual Miss Deane's had been all that could be wished, but Miss Jeanie's showed signs of haste and carelessness. He trusted to give a better report next time, and with a most elaborate bow the Signor took his departure.

"We must have a short morning, Miss Barton,"

said Mrs. Deane, as she too rose to leave the room. "The girls are tired from yesterday, and cannot be very energetic; so we will not expect much more of them."

"Oh, thank you, mamma dear," exclaimed the girls. Miss Barton felt equally grateful, for she was little inclined that morning for study. So in a short time the two eldest girls were walking in the shrubbery, and Carry was away to play with May.

"How ill Miss Barton looks, Lucy, doesn't she? I always think she looks worse after she's been home."

"Perhaps she doesn't get so well fed there, poor thing."

"Oh, but one day, Lucy, wouldn't make a difference, if it was only that. She seems miserable, somehow. Do you know, I'm very sorry I drew in her book, because I think it vexed her, though she never said so. She's never named it, isn't that odd."

"Perhaps she was too much hurt to speak of it, and thought her silence was sufficient reproach."

"Well, it was. I know I'm awfully sorry, for she does not look like a person to be joked with. There's a sort of holiness in her face somehow to me."

"Yes," said Lucy, "she has had some great sorrow, I am sure. We ought to give her as little trouble as possible."

"Well, I'm sure you don't give her much. Oh! there goes little Jerry by the coach-road; he must have got the second letters. Shall I run and ask him?"

"Yes, if you like. Are you expecting one?"

"Not I, unless Aunt Lucy has sent me the pattern for the shoe."

"Oh, those baby things, Jeanie, will they ever be done?"

"When two Sundays come in the middle of the week," answered Jeanie, running through the gate which led into the coach-road; and soon overtaking the little letter-carrier she found there was nothing for herself, and only one for her mamma, so she rejoined her sister, and they continued their walk until the first bell for luncheon warned them to retrace their steps.

"Did mamma say the Stapletons were coming to stay, Jeanie?" asked Carry, when they came into the schoolroom after lunch.

"Yes, I'm so glad; they're such jolly girls. We shall have some good fun. I tell you what I

thought of directly, that I would finish that Proverb I began, and ask mamma if we might act it."

"Yes, that would be famous—do. We might act it on dear granny's birthday. I am sure it would amuse her."

"The worst of it is, I don't know how we should manage for gentlemen—the boys will be gone back to school."

"Oh, so they will; that is a nuisance. There are the Warleigh boys and young Stanhope from Dr. Evans's—I dare say he'd give them leave."

"Yes, but they're horrid sticks. I wish Francis and Everard had not got to go back."

"When is granny's birthday?"

"The week after next, the 31st."

"How provoking; it's worse than if it was months hence—just to go before. I think I shall try and coax dad to let Francis stay."

"Everard isn't going back to Eton, you know. He's going to a tutor's to prepare for College."

"So he is; we might have him then, if he is not obliged to go by a certain day." They were thus talking when Lucy entered.

"Hard at work, girls," sneeringly she said, smiling.

"I can't work directly after lunch, Lucy," said Jeanie, throwing herself back in an arm-chair. "Miss Barton isn't here yet."

"Tell her what we were talking about, Jeanie," said Carry.

"Oh, yes. Lucy, what do you think of getting up an acted Proverb now the Stapletons are coming to stay?"

"Yes, I think that would be capital."

"I've begun one; I'll read it you by-and-by."

"I should like to hear it very much."

"We're only in trouble about the boys—Francis will be gone—because we couldn't possibly learn and get it up in less than a fortnight; indeed, I haven't quite finished it. Do you think papa would let him stay for it?"

"Oh no, dear, impossible. Nothing but illness or some most serious reason, would be tolerated for keeping a boy back after the day. He must go, I'm sure."

"Well, we could have Everard, and the Warleighs, and Stanhope."

"Oh, yes, we shall manage, I dare say. But do get on now with your work, there's good girls, and we'll talk about it by-and-by. I have a terribly

tough bit of German I want to get over, so I must ask you not to talk."

"All right. Come, Carry, let's go to work," said Jeanie, but never moving one inch from the arm-chair in which she had flung herself, until the door opened and Miss Barton entered. Then she sprang up and begged her to take it—"For I'm going to work, as Francis says, like distraction. I don't mean to worry you any more, Miss Barton, until you've got some more roses in your cheeks."

"Thank you, dear. I think you'll never worry me again, then."

"Oh, I hope I shall, lots of times."

"You strange child, Jeanie," said Lucy; "what a speech to make!"

"Well, Miss Barton knows what I mean—don't you?"

"I know you mean a great deal that is right, Jeanie, dear, but want persistence to do it; and I know you do a great deal of wrong for want of thought to check you."

"I know I'm the naughty girl of the family, but what does Shakspeare say, Miss Barton? 'They say, best men are moulded out of faults,' and I've no doubt that applies to women as well. By

the bye, I haven't learnt any Shakspeare for an age; when may I again? I should like to play one of Shakspeare's characters. That Katharine would suit me in 'The Taming of the Shrew.' How I should like to spout: 'Thy husband is thy life, thy lord, thy keeper—one who toils for thee.'"

"I think I asked you not to talk, Jeanie," said Lucy, who with knit brow had been puzzling over her German all through Jeanie's chatter.

"Yes, come Jeanie to work, like a good girl, if you really mean not to worry me."

"Yes, dear Miss Barton, I'm really going to begin. Where's my German exercise book? Miss Carry, you've moved it."

"That I'm sure I've not, Jeanie. I've not seen it."

"Here it is, all right! Don't get excited. Oh, dear, what stupid stuff it is! I say, Miss Barton, we are going to get up a Proverb, if mamma will let us, on granny's birthday. I'm writing one;—I've just done it."

"Jeanie, Jeanie, talking again!"

"Oh, dear, I forgot. I wish I'd a padlock I could put on my tongue; it won't stop when I want it to."

"You'd be sure to lose the key, Jeanie," said Carry.

"Then you'd lose my delightful conversation for ever, and that would be a blessing to Lucy and Miss Barton, at any rate."

"Oh, do be quiet, Jeanie."

"Jeanie," said Miss Barton, quietly, "your good resolutions are soon gone;—you do worry me now very much."

"Not another word, Miss Barton, will I say. Lucy, don't interrupt me with your perpetual chatter now, there's a good child," whispered the incorrigible girl.

Then drawing with her pen and ink a most hideous face on the top of her paper, and writing under it, "Herr Talbach—portraits in this style, 1*s.* 6*d.*," she proceeded with her exercise.

The next morning, just before luncheon, the Stapletons arrived—Mr. and Mrs., and two girls just out. Lucy was to forego studies during their stay, that she might assist in entertaining them. Francis deplored having to leave the next day excessively, as he rather "affected" the youngest Miss Stapleton, who certainly was a remarkably pretty, unaffected girl; and poor Francis was still more "disgusted," as he said, when he found out the con-

templated amusement for grandmamma's birthday. He would have liked it so much. So he was finally promised that papa should write to his tutor for leave for two days, if he had a good report of him. With this consolation he departed, carrying with him a dead rose-bud, presented to him the night before by pretty Amy Stapleton, in his waistcoat pocket, where it must be owned it remained until it was thrown out in the little back-garden at Mrs. Scotton's, the laundress at Eton, preparatory to the waistcoat being put into the wash-tub!

If the pretty young ladies whose little hearts flutter with pleasure as some such relic is transferred to the pocket of the young man who has been so attentive, could but know how many more such treasures have been there before, and how they have invariably shared the same fate! What a curious collection might be made of the contents of white waistcoat pockets,—mottoes out of bonbons, little pieces of ribbon, endless faded flowers,—all, not cherished in silver paper and locked away in desks, as the little fluttering hearts had thought, but rudely turned out of the pocket by the soapy hands of some vigorous washerwoman, who ruthlessly throws them away among the "rubbidge."

Notwithstanding the departure of Francis, the girls managed to be very merry in the evening, all closeted in the schoolroom to hear the Proverb, which Jeanie had worked at with more assiduity than any study, and completed to the perfect satisfaction, at least, of her young auditors. Casting the parts also afforded great amusement, and the learning and copying out gave them ample employment. Lucy and the Miss Stapletons undertook this, as Jeanie and Carry had not time, and mamma would not hear of holidays for them, except on the eventful day itself, on which dear grandmamma would attain her seventy-ninth year. She had promised to appear at the play, if they would only have it early enough, and so of course they had agreed it should begin at seven punctually.

The Proverb was to be kept a profound secret; even Miss Barton was not to know. The next important thing was the dresses, upon which there was great discussion. Jeanie was of opinion that the scene should be carried back to the time of George III., that they might get the becoming mob-caps, looped-up petticoats, and powder and hoops; so it was finally decided. The alteration of a few lines Jeanie thought would be necessary to give

the date of the little piece, and it would be so much more effective than modern dresses, and so it was determined. Amy Stapleton and Francis were to play the principal parts. Jeanie tried in vain to induce papa to act, but he would not, so Albert Warleigh was to play the father of Amy, Mr. Deane consoling Jeanie with a promise to be stage-manager. The day came at last, and the excitement was tremendous. They had only been allowed two rehearsals, and the little authoress greatly feared it would be a failure, and was proportionately anxious. All the day she was perpetually in some room or other hearing parts, and at length the light began to fade, and the dressing commenced.

The large drawing-room was capitally arranged, and about thirty people invited as spectators. Mr. Deane had had a piece of canvas painted to represent boards, and this was drawn over the carpet as far as the stage was permitted to extend.

Mr. Deane, besides his duties as stage-manager, had the bell to ring, and the curtain to draw, and all necessary arrangements to make of setting the scene, &c. The small morning-room opening into the drawing-room was the green-room, and there, at half-past six, they all assembled, with their parts

in their hands, positively as nervous as though they were going to make their first appearances at Covent Garden.

They could hear the buzz of conversation amongst the audience, above all Lady Maudesley's silly voice, for Mr. Deane said the party would not be complete without her, and the bell rang, and Mrs. Deane, who had kindly consented to be the orchestra, commenced the overture. Little May had been to bed in the middle of the day on purpose that she might sit up to see the play, and as grandmamma was going to retire the moment it was over, she was well contented to go at the same time, and told everyone she was not going to bed till granny did. Tightly her little fingers pressed grandmamma's hand with delight when the music began, and when the curtain rose, until the very end, her eyes never moved from the mimic stage, or her fingers loosened their grasp of grandmamma's hand. We will devote a fresh chapter to the Proverb, as it was acted, in case other young ladies may feel inclined to patronise the young authoress, and have the same performance at home.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Richard Franklin . . .	Mr. A. Warleigh.
Giles Hartfield	Mr. G. Warleigh.
Squire Freelove . . .	Mr. F. Deane.
Robin Goodyear . . .	
Phyllis (*Franklin's daughter*) .	Miss A. Stapleton.
A Servant	Miss C. Deane.

Scene I.—*Interior of* Franklin's *cottage;* Phyllis, *his daughter, discovered spinning, her father at a table, his hand supporting his head.*

Phyllis. Father, dear, it might be worse, don't be so down-hearted, they'll never turn you out of the farm you 've managed so well, and paid rent for so many years.

Franklin. If the squire was at home, lass, I should have no fears, but that puppy of an agent he'll not listen to reason, depend on it; he is a hard judging man, with no thought but for himself; but, there, I don't know why I should be so miserable. I'm an honest man, and owe no man anything. I will pluck up a heart (*rising and coming forward*). I tell you what I'll do, wench, I'll write to the squire myself, and tell him all about it, then I'll speak civil

to this fellow, and see if I can get him to hear reason.

Phyllis (*rising*). How much more money do you want to get, father?

Franklin. Well you see I'm a quarter behind, so it seems heavier than ever; it comes to a matter of twenty pound. I've offered him fifteen, and he won't take it. The fact is, girl, he wants the farm for his son-in-law that is to be, and he's glad of a chance to turn me out.

Phyllis. It's too bad! A queer sort of a girl must she be that would wed with such a churl as Peter Ellison. I met him on May-day, and he bade me dance with him, but I warrant me I soon sent him about his business. I'd sooner never have danced again than have been seen footing it with such as he.

Franklin. I don't know, if he marries Giles Hartfield's daughter but he's got his match!

Phyllis. I have heard her called pretty, father!—Robin says so—but I believe he does it to vex me.

Franklin (*putting his hand on her shoulder*). Ah! my little lass! Robin will look at thee no more when thy poor father is turned out of house and home.

Phyllis. If I thought so, I would never speak to Robin more.

Franklin. Ah! my little maid, it's one of life's hard lessons! "Poverty parts good company." One thing this sorrow teaches me gratitude for what I once thought cruel hard. I can now say, thank Heaven, your mother is there (*pointing upwards*); not here! [*Dashes his hand across his eyes.*

Phyllis (*going to him*). Dear father! (*Loud knock at the door.*) Who can that be?

[*Goes to door, opens it, and admits* GILES HARTFIELD (MR. G. WARLEIGH).

Giles. Is your father in?

Phyllis. Yes, sir, there he is. (*Aside.*) The wretch! I can hardly find it in my heart to speak a civil word to him.

Giles. Good morning, Franklin.

Franklin. Good morning, sir.

Giles. Have you the rent ready?

Franklin. I have not, sir.

Giles. Then I'll tell you what, I'll stand it no longer; that money is to be forthcoming to-night at eight o'clock, or out you go bag and baggage. I'm sick of the business, and I'll be worried with it no more.

Franklin. Oh! sir, have pity; take the fifteen, and give me time for the rest, I do entreat you!

I've been here fifty years, man and boy; my father had it before me. Write to the squire; he'll say you are to have patience with me, I know he will.

Giles. No such thing, everything's placed in my hands; it's because the squire's too easy a man, and hasn't heart to press people, that he's left me here to manage for him, and have his rent I will.

Franklin. Then, sir, you must do your worst, for pay you by eight to-night I cannot.

[ROBIN GOODYEAR *puts his head in at the door, and beckons out* PHYLLIS, *who has been standing behind listening to this conversation, and making angry signs at* GILES. *Exit* PHYLLIS.

Giles. Very well, sir, as you please. I have been more indulgent to you than any of the tenants.

Franklin. Lord help the others, then.

Giles. No insolence, man! I still give you until eight to-night. Good morrow. [*Exit* GILES.

Franklin. Phyllis, Phyllis! Where is the girl gone? Ah! she couldn't bear to stay and hear that cruel fellow talk, but I'll write to the squire to-night, see if I don't, and tell him all. The money for the postage will be well spent, I know; but would to

Heaven he were here! My poor little home! There, in yon chimney-corner, sat my poor old father and mother. I think I see them now, and their happy, kindly faces, when I brought them home a daughter to love and tend them, and then when the old man died, he said, "the farm will be yours now, lad; keep it up as I've done." And I've tried to, I have, and done my duty by the land for seventeen years; and now to think when a bad harvest, and some heavy losses have made me get behind, this man should turn me out for five pounds!

Enter PHYLLIS, *hurriedly.*

Father, Father!—See here!—Cheer up! See what I've found! We needn't leave the farm, now—look! [*Holding up a large leathern purse.*

Franklin (*starting*). Found child? Where—how?

Phyllis. Well, Robin came along, and wanted to speak to me a moment, and I ran out to him, and when I came back just a step or two from the door, there lay this, and I opened it; and, father, there is six golden guineas in it, and a seven-shilling piece. You needn't be turned out of the farm now.

Franklin (*taking the purse, and looking at it*). Phyllis, it is not ours.

Phyllis. But whose can it be? It seems dropped at our door on purpose to save us, father. Oh! keep it, do; and pay your rent, and let us stay in the dear old place.

Franklin. No one has been by our door this morning, Phyllis, that could have lost this, but Giles Hartfield. It's his, Phyllis, and he must have it back.

Phyllis. No, no, father, there's no proof that it is. He's a bad, hard man that deserves to lose it, when he would turn you out of doors; and a vastly good trick to play him, too, 'twould be to pay him with his own money—the old wretch!

Franklin (*who seems to have been thinking deeply*). Pay him all and keep my little home about me—see my dreams fulfilled of better days to come—the little trees I have planted bearing fruit, which the colt I've reared might carry to market. How could I bear to see it led away and sold? This—this (*clutching the purse*) will save it all, and bring back hope once more. I will do it. Shall I—yes—Hark! What's that? A voice called me.

[*Looking round cautiously.*

Phyllis (*who has been anxiously watching him, coming to him*). No, no, father dear; be calm. There is nothing—no one is here.

The Amateur Performance.

Franklin. Yes, again I hear it. "Richard"—it said, "Richard!" It was Her voice!—thy mother's, child. She loved an honest man, not a thief. No, no, Phyllis—away with it! (*Dashing the purse from him.*) We will go from our home if need be—penniless, friendless, but honest and true; and not ashamed, Phyllis, to look up to that home where she is, and where we there may hope to join her, my child.

[*Opens his arms, she runs into them.*

Tableau as the Curtain falls.

SCENE II.—*A room at* GILES HARTFIELD'S. GILES *seated at a bureau with account books, &c.*

One thousand and fifty and four—fifty-four. Ah! he little thinks how I've worked for him, and what a fine round sum I've gathered for him. (*Rising and coming forward.*) He'd never have done it for himself—never; he hasn't the heart to press them. The women's tears are too much for him—tears, pooh! What are they? Pumped up easily enough when they're needed, and found useful with soft-hearted fools, like our good squire. It needs something harder to touch my heart. He never expected half what I've got when he sent me down—not half. I know he didn't. (*Knock at door.*) Come in!

Enter Servant—(CARRY DEANE).

Servant. Sir, a man of the name of Franklin wants to see you.

Giles. Franklin? Why, I was there an hour ago. I can't be bothered with him. Tell him if he's come to me with the old story, I'm busy and can't see him.

Servant. Yes, sir. [*Exit.*

Giles. No, sir, I'm not to be talked and cajoled out of my senses. He's had one quarter's law—quite enough too. He must pay the money, or out he goes. It will make a pretty little holding for Peter and my Polly.

Re-enter Servant.

Servant. It's not about that, sir. He says he's something of importance to tell you.

Giles. Oh! show him up, then.

[Servant *goes out, and returns immediately, showing in* FRANKLIN. *Places chair and exit.*

Giles. Now, then, what's your business with me? —have you brought your rent?

Franklin. Alas! no, sir. I have brought you

what I believe you lost on your visit to me this morning.

[*Draws purse from his pocket and presents it to* GILES.

Giles (*taking and looking at it, opening it and counting contents*). Six guineas and a seven-shilling piece! Umph! How much do you want to make your rent up to the sum required?

Franklin. Five guineas, sir.

Giles. And you say you found this purse with more money in it than you need to keep a roof over your head, and you bring it back to me.

Franklin. Surely, sir. It is not mine.

Giles. Neither, friend, is it mine.

[*Giving him back the purse.*

Franklin (*starting, and refusing to take it*). Not yours?—Then whose? It lay on my very door-step, —found but a few minutes after you left.

Giles. Not dropped by me. You can pay your rent with it now, and have a balance to spare.

Franklin. No, sir. I have gone through that temptation, and been given strength to come out of it. Be kind enough to take charge of it till an owner is found, as there will be, doubtless; and good day, sir. I'll not detain you longer.

Giles (*aside*). This is wonderful. (*Aloud.*) Stay, my good man; are you prepared to leave your house, as agreed, if the rent is not forthcoming.

Franklin. Quite, sir.

Giles (*putting his hand on* FRANKLIN'S *shoulder.*) You're a brave man—a very brave man. I am said to be a hard one. I believe I am; I flinch at no duty —am moved by no entreaties, to swerve from what I think my duty. I was placed here by Squire Freelove, to collect his rents. I have gathered for him half a year's income which he would never have got himself; for his heart was too soft to press those he believed could not pay. I thought I had no heart—you thought I hadn't; you've touched it now, at any rate. Bring me the money you can afford to give me, and I'll give you another quarter's law.

Franklin. You will! Oh, sir! I have no words.

Giles. Go, go at once. Fetch your money, and take the purse. It is as much yours as mine; and if reward be offered, should, of course, be yours to claim.

Franklin (*taking the purse*). Willingly, sir! I am not afraid of it now.

Enter PHYLLIS *hastily.*

Phyllis (*dropping a curtsey to* GILES). Oh, sir! I

beg your pardon for running in so; but please, sir, that isn't your purse that father brought; and please, father, here's the rest of the money (*giving him a canvas bag*) that you saved for the rent, and if you'll pay the gentleman, we can stay in the farm, father.

Franklin. Phyllis! Phyllis! Are you mad, child?

Phyllis. No, father dear; but I was in such a hurry. I ran quite past the servant, if you please, sir (*curtseying to* GILES), because the purse is not yours, sir; and I did want father to pay the rent, and keep the dear old place.

Giles. And so you have found the owner of the purse, then?

Phyllis. Please, sir, I mustn't say any more, only that father's to pay the rent.

Franklin. What do you mean, child? Don't speak in riddles. Is the money mine, do you mean?

Phyllis. Yes, father, put at your door on purpose, only I mustn't say any more.

Franklin. I have settled my business here with Mr. Hartfield; we'll go home and talk this over. I don't understand it, sir. If I've come by the money in a way I should like, I'll bring it to you in the

morning; but else we'll abide by our bargain just made.

Enter Servant, *announcing* SQUIRE FREELOVE.

[*Exit* Servant.

Freelove. Ah, Hartfield, how d'ye do? You're occupied. Do not let me interrupt you. (*Aside.*) A vastly pretty little maiden, who may she be?

Giles. Sir! I am no less astonished than delighted to see you.

Freelove. Yes; I took a freak in my head, and thought I would come and see how the old place was getting on; but finish your business. I'll sit here and wait.

Giles. More your business than mine, sir! These are tenants of yours—Richard Franklin and his daughter.

Freelove. Franklin, of the Marshlands, you don't mean it? How d'ye do, old friend? (*Holding out his hand,* FRANKLIN *takes it respectfully.*) And this pretty wench your daughter? Why, the farm should be rent free for owning such an inmate. (PHYLLIS *curtseys.*) What business brings them here?

Giles. An interesting and curious one—worth hearing, sir. If you will step aside with me, I will relate it to you.

Freelove. Willingly. I love a good story, especially when the heroine is a fair maiden.

[*They talk aside.*

Franklin. Phyllis, what is this story of the money? —no mysteries—let me know.

Phyllis. I must not let you know, unless you promise you will accept it.

Franklin. Do you think if I did know, I should?

Phyllis. Yes, father. I think you would.

Franklin. Then I promise.

Phyllis. Dear father, Robin threw the purse there. He knew you would never consent to take his savings. He thought if you found it like that, you would use it. It never struck him you would think it was Hartfield's, only that some kind hand had, guided by a higher, helped you in your need. To-day, when he came and saw me weeping, he told me all, wondering how it could be we were still in trouble; for he had watched behind the hay-stack, and seen me pick it up, and hoped that all was well. I ran off directly, and came up-stairs, rudely enough, I fear, but—

[GILES *and* FREELOVE *come down.*

Freelove. A good tale, Giles, it needs but a good sequel. Franklin, henceforth the farm of Marsh-

lands is yours for ever, and the only rent I claim—and, mind you, that must be paid punctually—is every quarter day a kiss from your fair daughter. I understand from Giles two quarters are owing. [*Advancing to* PHYLLIS, *she retreats.*] Is it not a bargain, Franklin?

Franklin. You are too good, sir. My daughter will not refuse so great an honour to purchase for her old father so great a blessing.

Freelove. What say you, pretty maiden?

Phyllis. What will Robin say?

Freelove. Is there a Robin in the case? Well, a marriage portion must purchase his consent; and I will invite myself to the wedding festivities. Now come, I must be paid, for you surely would not be less honest than your father,—two, you know, two quarters owing.

[*He advances to* PHYLLIS, *and kisses her twice. She takes the kisses, then wipes them off with her muslin apron.*

Phyllis (*curtseying*). Thank you, sir. I'll take very good care the rent's never behind again.

Freelove (*laughing heartily*). Little rogue, you're no courtier; but remember, I'll take very good care to look the back rent up if there ever should be any

owing; however, send your friend Robin to me to-night, we'll have a little talk. And may you both in your future life together, remember the good old adage your father has so well illustrated.

[*Coming forward to the audience.*

Ladies and gentlemen, one moment stay
Before the curtain falls upon our play;
For I would first your kind indulgence claim,
Then bid you give our little play a name.
We own our actors will not bear compare
With others you have often seen elsewhere;
But youth and inexperience we must plead,
And ask the kind encouragement we need:
For first appearances on any stage
Are trying, you'll admit, at any age.
The conduct of the Farmer in our play
Was upright, I am sure you *all* will say;
So as you guess one of our good old saws,
I know you'll give us courage by applause.

The applause *was* loud and continuous, and after the actors had been severally called and received their plaudits, a loud cry was raised of "Author! author!" and poor blushing Jeanie was pushed forward to receive three rounds of applause, and hear several voices say, "Well done!" and "Honesty's the best policy," guessed by Hugh Everard, who preferred being a spectator to an actor, and had therefore given the part offered him to George Warleigh, so

that the name had not previously been confided to him. He had offered, if they liked, to play Robin, but that they would not hear of, so Francis, with a change of wig, managed this elaborate (!) part as well as that of Squire Freelove. Amy Stapleton looked so charming in her dress, that there was a general request not to change it, which she consented to do, on condition the others would also remain in theirs. Certainly nothing could be more becoming to her than the little cap, with its cherry-coloured ribands—her rich brown hair tied in a club behind; the chintz dress, looped up over a green quilted petticoat, showing her dainty little feet in shoes and buckles; and the white muslin apron, and handkerchief crossed over her neck, and fastened with a large old-fashioned brooch: quite a picture she looked, and Mr. Deane declared he would have a picture of her, too, for he would photograph her himself with his own apparatus.

Tired little May went off with grandmamma to bed, and to dream the play all over again. The rest of the audience were conducted into the dining-room, where the actors were all waiting, quite ready for the supper provided for them. Everyone was warm in expressions of satisfaction at the writing and

acting of the little entertainment, and all agreed in their opinion of the excellent acting of Albert Warleigh as Franklin.

"I never thought," said Jeanie, "he'd half so much in him. I declare he played it beautifully."

"And so did Amy," said Lucy. "I am sure she made a sweet Phyllis."

"Yes, that she did," said Jeanie. "Carry looks tired to death. I think she'd better slip off to bed."

"Yes," said Lucy; "I will tell her to go when we move from supper."

Carry seemed glad of the suggestion, and went straight up-stairs from the dining-room. Miss Barton, at her own wish, had retired soon after the play, and had her supper taken to her in the school-room. The door was open as Carry passed to bed, and Miss Barton saw her.

"Going to bed, Carry?" she asked.

"Yes, Miss Barton; I am very tired."

Miss Barton rose and came to her, saying,

"I daresay you are, dear, excitement is so fatiguing; but I don't think you have seemed quite the thing for some time. Don't you feel quite well?"

"Yes, quite," answered Carry, pettishly. "What

does every one mean about me? I am sure I'm just as I always was, and people worry me about being ill."

"My dear, you are not as you always were; you were as merry as a little cricket, and lately you have seemed strange, and dull, and absent."

"There's nothing the matter, indeed. Good-night, Miss Barton; I'm so tired." And Carry hurried away to her own room.

Miss Barton went quietly back to her school-room, wondering a little what it was that ailed Carry, and certain that something had changed the child very much,—she determined to watch her narrowly, and if she did not alter, call her mother's attention to it.

CHAPTER VI.

THE Stapletons were to leave the next day but one after the play, and as it was towards the end of the week, Mrs. Deane said, beyond getting ready for the masters, studies might be discontinued until the Stapletons' departure. The young people therefore asked permission to go to a wood a mile or two off on a nutting expedition, for they thought it would let them down gently after their excitement the night before, and they would return to "a dinner tea," and go early to bed, leaving Francis at the station, to go back to Eton. Mrs. Deane consented, on condition that Miss Barton accompanied them. So at twelve o'clock they started in the waggonette, picking up Hugh Everard on the way, as he and Francis were inseparable, a large hamper of eatables from the supper overnight of course going with them. It was a bright breezy day, quite the thing, they all declared, because it would not be too warm in the

wood; and merrily they talked and laughed all the way, with the exception of Carry, who was still silent and abstracted.

May was to go and drive with mamma in the little pony carriage, as Mrs. Deane thought the picnic would be too much for her, and she was quite contented. The clothes for the little Martins were completed, and May had given some of her own money towards some pinafores; so that one of the objects of the drive was to take these things, and that was a source of great delight to her, and quite consoled her for not joining the nutting excursion.

The excitement of procuring the nuts, and the general hilarity that prevailed, seemed a little to rouse Carry, and she woke up from her dreamy state, and seemed as cheerful as the rest; while gentle Miss Barton sat beneath a large old oak, within hearing of the merry party, reading, or at least with a book which she could have read, but which lay now beside her, while she, leaning back against the tree, gazed up into its branches, amongst which she seemed to read tales of the past far more absorbing than the light tale she had brought.

"Your governess is too sad to be with young

people, Lucy, don't you think so?" said Miss Stapleton. "She would give me the dismals."

"I don't think she's sad, exactly, but very quiet, and I like that. I'm sure a rackety governess would never do for Jeanie."

"Well, rackety—no, perhaps; but cheerful, and more full of bright suggestions and amusements for you. The governess we had was so charming, she had always something to suggest which was delightful: even our studies seemed to come in the form of amusement."

"Miss Barton does not do that, certainly, but she is always kind and willing to do anything we ask her."

"Yes, but she's sad and dull,—not the sort of person I should choose to be governess to my girls."

"I like her very much, and have never thought of her in that sort of way. She is to teach us, not amuse us."

"Oh, but I think a governess—a resident governess, who has the charge of you always—should do both. Is she naturally sad, or is something the matter with her just now?"

"I don't know. She has always been quiet and

serious, but she gives us all the impression of having some home grief which distresses her."

"Oh, here's a bough laden with nuts—look, Lucy, and I can't reach them," said Carry, in an excited voice. "Shall I call the boys?"

"Yes, do, they're only a little way on." The boys were soon summoned, and the nuts secured.

"Our basket's the fullest," said Amy Stapleton; "you've been chattering, we've been working."

"That's good, Amy; the fact is you've had all the help, and Lucy, and I, and Carry, have had to fish for ourselves; those wretched boys have given all their help to you."

Amy laughed, and tossed back the long hair, brown as the nuts she was gathering, and which, despite of every fashion, she always wore in the long soft curls it seemed made to fall into. If she tried to braid it some saucy lock would slip away from its moorings, and her father invariably pulled it all down, for he was very proud of it, and liked it displayed as much as possible. Some one else seemed to admire it too to-day, for Francis kept picking up the brownest nuts and putting them beside her hair, saying how well it matched, and rare the colour was; that the nuts only wanted a sunbeam to rest

on them to be exactly like it. Certainly the two young gentlemen had given the most of their assistance to Amy and Jeanie, and Lucy and Miss Stapleton had to "fish," as they said, for themselves; however, this little remark seemed to have its effect, for the party kept more together afterwards, and the assistance rendered by the young gentlemen was more general.

"Is this a fern, Lucy?" asked Miss Stapleton, handing a leaf to her as they sat resting awhile from their labour.

"No, dear, the leaf of the Crane's-bill."

"Well, don't look so horrified. You know I'm a Londoner, and know nothing about plants in the world."

"Oh, Lucy knows about everything, Emily. She's got the most beautiful collection of wild flowers you ever saw, and so exquisitely arranged. I began one; you shall see mine, it's lovely!" said Jeanie, laughing.

"And did you gather them all yourself?" asked Amy.

"Yes, every one; and I am making a new book now. Wherever I go I gather a few flowers, and put them in a sort of nosegay, and write the place where

they were gathered, and the date of the day underneath; it makes a sort of journal."

"So it does—what a pretty idea—I should like that," said Amy.

"Let me make you a nosegay to-day, then," said Francis; "here's Knautia and blue Succory, Ivy-leaved Toad-flax, and, I declare, under this tree some Violets."

"It's no use putting in blue succory, Francis, the stem is so hard and stubborn it won't do in a book."

"Oh, all right; then I'll take that out."

"Shall we have this pretty little pink thing?" said Amy.

"No, no, that's the flower of the Crane's-bill, and smells so horribly, it will quite scent your book; the Yarrow, common as it is, is very pretty, we can get a piece going home, it is always abundant by the road-side; but a little farther back I saw something more lovely than anything you've got, to my thinking —some Heath."

"Oh, where?" said Francis; "I'll go."

"We'll all go, at least, those that are not tired."

"I am tired rather," said Lucy; "I will go and sit with Miss Barton until you come, and then I think we must be going, or we shall miss Francis' train."

"How far back are we to go, Luce?" said Francis.

"To where we found that large coloured butterfly; only a little way, the narrow path with the deep ruts in it."

"Oh, yes, I know; come along," and away they started, Lucy walking back to the tree beneath which Miss Barton still sat.

"Still here, Miss Barton?" she said; "I fear this is a very dull day for you."

"Not at all, dear, I like it so much. I love a wood, and it is so peaceful and quiet. I could hear your merry voices, and the birds singing, and the bees humming; and I have been watching two dear little squirrels playing such pranks that I have been quite amused and not the least dull. Where are the others?"

"Gone to find some Heath for a flower-book; Amy wants to begin one like mine."

"Ah, there are not many girls who can make such a book as that, it wants great taste and neat clever fingers to do it as yours is done."

"Oh, does it?—it seems so easy."

"The border of dried leaves so prettily arranged round each page is so very nice an idea."

"Yes, I think that does set it off."

"Both your flower-books are nice, but the Book of Recollections is the prettiest."

"What a good name for it, Miss Barton. I shall call it that, I think. Talking of recollections reminds me of something I want to say to you. I have kept thinking you would say something to one of us, but as you never have, I do really think I ought to speak to you."

"Dear me, Lucy, what a grave beginning; what is it?"

"Well, about your diary." Lucy felt nervous herself, so she did not look in Miss Barton's face, or she would have been startled by the flush that covered it, and the deadly pallor which succeeded. "I only wanted to say," she continued, "that Jeanie is so very sorry she took such a liberty, and to assure you that she did not read a line scarcely—only here and there when she caught the mention of a name she drew the imaginary face. I was there all the time, and it was not more than ten minutes in her hand, and she chattered all the while."

"Oh, it's of no consequence," stammered Miss Barton, "only I thought it unladylike."

"So it was, very, and I told Jeanie so. She is very sorry; she thinks it has grieved you, but she does not like to say so."

"Tell her to think no more about it. I have burnt it now, so I shall think of it no more. They are silly things to keep. Never keep one, Lucy," she continued, earnestly. "What is good for us to remember we shall remember. There are many, many things through life it is wiser to forget. God wills us to sorrow, but He wills not that we should sorrow always; and thus to register our griefs keeps us in constant mind of them, and keeps them fresh when God has in mercy given us time to forget, or at least to deaden them."

"And yet I have heard it called so wise to keep a diary; and we have many great examples."

"Yes, we have; but do you know, Lucy, though I acknowledge the great interest they have, I know nothing to me more painful than to read a journal. It seems to me such a breach of honour, to expose to the public what could only have been intended for the writer's own eye. Depend on it, I would never have kept one had I been a literary or famous person, for fear of the after publication."

"Do you not think many were written for the purpose of being afterwards published?" asked Lucy.

"If they were they could not have answered the moral end which they are supposed to do. Who would like to expose to the public his every private thought—his heartburnings, jealousies, disappointments, and above all, his religious sentiments? Yet the argument is, that in keeping a journal you *do* put these things down, and are thus able to learn and improve yourself by reviewing past 'follies.' There is one journal which, fascinating as it is, pains me inexpressibly to read; for the poor dead hand that wrote many of those passages never intended them to be made public, I feel sure, or would have liked his enemies—and he had many—to read his most private thoughts. I feel myself blushing as I read such diaries, as though self-convicted. Surely we have only to put ourselves in the same position to judge how far it would be agreeable to the feelings of others."

"I never kept a diary myself," said Lucy, "but I'm quite sure if I did I should not like it to be published. But if I were very clever, and possessed of great literary talent, and knew that what I wrote

would not seem rubbish to read, I don't think I should mind."

"Not, Lucy, when your heart has left its keeping, and in your diary you write, as you would if you kept it faithfully, how you felt on so sacred a subject? Should you like such sentiments to be made common property?"

"Oh, no," said Lucy, blushing deeply as she answered. "But then I shouldn't write such things down."

"Then it would not be the true index of your mind. A mere statement of where you went on certain days, to whom you wrote, what letters you received—such a diary may be, and doubtless is, useful as a remembrancer, but would be nothing to publish; it would not show your character, as those journals which are published are intended to do."

"Then I'll never keep one, certainly," said Lucy, smiling, "in case of my becoming some day famous, and having my private thoughts made public. Here come the rest. We must be getting on to the station—must we not? And I may tell poor Jeanie she is forgiven?"

"Most certainly; in a sense, she has done me a

favour, for she has made me burn what I am only sorry I ever wrote."

At the moment the party joined them, all with sprigs of heather in their hats; and the waggonette being in waiting as desired, at the entrance of the wood, they drove to the station, and Miss Barton observed, with a half-sad smile, as the action recalled to her happy bygone days, an exchange of two pieces of heath between Amy and Francis, and the long, wistful look of the large, tender blue eyes at the departing figure passing through the station gates.

There is something, much as it may be laughed at, very sweet and touching in the pure innocent love of two very young people, it savours of the first mutual love, ere the trail of the serpent passed over the fair blossoms of innocence and purity; and as Miss Barton watched this young boy and girl in this first dawn of their attachment, some such thoughts occurred to her.

Mrs. Deane met the party at the door as they alighted, with little May in her hand, to whom some nuts were immediately given, although she received injunctions at the same time from mamma not to eat more than six! So, being a most good, obedient,

and methodical little body, like her sister Lucy, she told out the six, and carried the rest into the nursery as a present to Hannah.

Amy went immediately to her own room, and enclosed her flowers in a favourite book of poems she had brought in to her, for Lucy said they would dry capitally in a book; and the leaf she chose to press them in contained a poem commencing—

> "What shall I do with all the days and hours
> That must be counted ere I see Thy face?"

And then joining the rest of the girls in the school-room, she asked to see the flower-books. Lucy of course showed them; and then Jeanie produced hers, begging that proper admiration might be accorded to it. The few flowers in it, and the untidy manner in which they were put in, caused great merriment; and so they chatted and laughed until the bell summoned them to the tea-dinner they had requested should be provided. Mr. Deane had been shooting with Mr. Stapleton and some friends all day, and came in, in the middle of the meal, very tired, but having brought home a capital bag, and therefore well inclined to discuss cold veal

and ham, chickens and tongue, &c., only he begged to be allowed to have some bitter beer instead of tea. This was accorded him.

"Well, authoress, how are you to-day?"

"Quite well, papa. But I do hope you don't mean to treat me to that name always."

"Why, haven't you earned it?"

"No, and if I had I'd much rather be called your Jeanie than such a silly name."

"Well, Jeanie, then, we've had no talk over this said play at all, and I want a little information. What sort of a farmer do you take Franklin to be?"

"How do you mean what sort of a farmer?"

"Why, how big a farm does he occupy, do you suppose?"

"Oh, I don't know; I never thought of that."

"So it appears, for you talk of his having to pay fifty pounds a year rent, which would pay for a very small holding; and yet you talk of hay-stacks, and colts being reared, and a variety of things that give one the impression of a farm of many acres."

Jeanie laughed as she answered—

"Well, you don't know; perhaps in George the

Third's reign land was cheaper, and rent much lower. I'll be bound they were."

"Well, we'll give you the benefit of the doubt, then. I want to know how you came to give Robin such a fine part—too much for any one to learn."

"Papa, dear!"

"And also how you came to be so innocent as to suggest such a rental. I suppose it was entirely out of consideration to your brother," said Mr. Deane, with a sly glance at Amy.

"Mark, you are too bad, I declare," said Mrs. Deane. "It was a very creditable first attempt, and it's cruel to subject it to such severe criticism."

"I don't mind, mamma dear, a bit; my naughty father is always 'chaffing' me about something."

"Doing what, Jeanie?" asked her mother.

"Well, that's Francis' fault. I always catch those school-boy's words."

"It's becoming rather a general term, I think, is it not?" said Mrs. Stapleton. "I fear I frequently hear it from my young ladies."

"I think it is. How shocked our great-grandmammas would have been at the conversation of the present day!"

"Yes, at the manners altogether," said Mr. Deane;

"the off-hand, rough-and-ready style, thought so much 'the thing' by the young men of the present day—the want of respect to their elders and superiors, and dreadful unpoliteness to the ladies of their own household, I must say, thoroughly disgusts me. I do hope Francis will never fall into such ways."

"He's too innately a gentleman ever to be anything else," said Mrs. Stapleton.

"Thank you, I hope he is. We have drilled it into him from his babyhood, and the insisting on proper attention to his mother and sisters makes it so much a habit, that he can, I think, never forget it anywhere."

"That young Everard is free from the fault you complain of, Deane," said Mr. Stapleton.

"Yes, indeed he is; that is why I am so glad of his friendship with Francis; and his manners, I am sure, make him so general a favourite. His attention to his father is beautiful to see. Mr. Everard is a very old man to have so young a son, you would think he was his grandfather, and Hugh's manner to him is delightful. You would imagine the old man was a king, and Hugh one of the humblest of his subjects, and in return the father

worships his boy. He thinks there is not his equal upon earth."

"No more there isn't," said a small enthusiastic bad grammarian at the other end of the table.

"Halloa, little Miss, who asked for your opinion?"

Poor little May grew red to the roots of her hair, as it was quite against all rule to talk at meals downstairs; and when so great a treat was accorded her as to have tea in the dining-room, it was on condition of perfect behaviour. Her mother always told her that only nursery babes talked at meals; little ladies who came down only spoke when they were spoken to.

"Forgive her this once, papa," pleaded Mrs. Deane.

Anything about Everard is too much for her. But little May could not get over the rebuke, knowing that she ought not to have spoken; and the poor little throat began to swell up, and the tears, vainly suppressed, to ooze through long lashes.

"May, go and see how Miss Barton's getting on, dearie. She complained of headache when she came in," said Mrs. Deane. "See if she feels better for her tea, there's a good little maid."

Gladly enough May accepted the excuse to escape,

so kindly made by her mother; and scrambling down from her high chair, ran off without looking at anyone.

"Did my saying that make her cry?" asked Mr. Deane. "What stupid little things girls are, to be sure."

"She knew she was wrong; it was out of the fulness of the heart the mouth spoke, poor child; and she quite feared the next order would be for her to leave the room."

"Don't you allow the little ones to talk at meals, then?" asked Miss Stapleton.

"No, not down here, unless they are spoken to; but when we're alone, we always talk a great deal to them, as I think if they are kept too silent while young, they will be afraid of the sound of their own voices when they grow older."

"Lady Maudesley is at the door, madam," said a servant, entering, "and would like to speak to one of the young ladies for a moment."

"Oh, won't she come in?" said Mr. Deane.

"No, sir; I said you were at tea, and her ladyship said she only wanted to leave a message, and would not detain one of the young ladies more than a minute."

"Go then, Lucy love, and speak to her."

"So sorry to interrupt you, dear," said Lady Maudesley, as Lucy approached; "having tea?—fancy! and I haven't had my dinner."

"It is only because we've been to a picnic, and are tired, that we are having a sort of dinner-tea," answered Lucy.

"How funny, I never had one. Well, I won't detain you long. I only came to ask you if you would all come to me on Tuesday—just a little friendly meeting on our lawn. I don't know what to call it, but a sort-of-thing, you know, just to do the civil to the neighbourhood. Our foolish little house is too small for a dinner-party of any number. So Sir Charles thought we'd ask everybody to a sort of garden-party. That stupid game, you know, what is it called, croquet? the girls and boys like so much, and Sir Charles will get the volunteer band to play. I'm going about asking people. It's something to do, and isn't so formal as notes. Will you come?"

"I'll ask mamma; I daresay we can."

"Jeanie, and Carry, and all, I mean?"

"Shall I go back, and ask her now?"

"Yes, it would be as well, dear, perhaps; and then I should know, shouldn't I?"

Lucy was soon back with consent, and away drove the little lady.

"What sort of a thing will it be like, I wonder?" said Mrs. Deane. "It's the first entertainment, except quiet small dinner parties, she's given since she's been here."

"Yes, I shall be curious to see her little ladyship entertaining a large number of guests. Well, come, have we done tea? because, if so, we'll go to the drawing-room; and I challenge you to a game at chess, Stapleton."

"I'm almost too sleepy; but I'll try."

The girls amused themselves with games and music, and then went, as they had arranged, early to bed. The next morning Jeanie came into the school-room with a letter in her hand, and said to Lucy, who was seated there at work—

"The letter-boy's just come, and here's one of these foreign letters for Miss Barton that I hate giving her, she always turns so white, and seems so distressed all day after. Lucy, I'd give something to know Miss Barton's history, I'm sure it's a very curious one."

"Yes, poor thing, hers has not been a happy life, I think."

"Carry, child, what's the matter?"

"Nothing, only I can't learn this lesson."

"No, but you got so red all at once as though something hurt or startled you.

"Nonsense, Lucy, you're always fancying something; don't talk to me, I can't get this stuff into my head."

"Where is Miss Barton—in her room, Lucy?"

"I don't know, dear, but I daresay she is, she was here just now. I don't think you should answer me quite so sharply, Carry," continued Lucy, turning to her, "you did look red and strange enough to attract my attention, but if your lesson worries you bring it to me, and I will try to teach and explain it to you."

"I can learn it by myself."

"Oh, very well! as you like, dear, but I will willingly help you if I can. Here is Miss Barton, Jeanie."

"I have a letter for you," said Jeanie, handing it to her.

"Thank you, love," she said, taking it from Jeanie, and, as she had feared, growing deadly pale; but without further word or comment she placed the letter in her pocket, and sitting down to the

table began to look over the exercises placed there for correction.

A few moments passed, and then Lucy rose, and saying, in a low voice, to Miss Barton,

"Will you let me correct those exercises? I think I can, while you go and read your letter in peace."

Miss Barton looked up with a startled and searching glance at Lucy as she answered,

"You are very kind, dear, I am in no hurry; a long letter from abroad will keep; why should you think I want to read it?"

"Oh, only because I always like to read mine, and, I beg your pardon, only I thought the letter from your manner seemed like one you would like to open. I have not offended you, have I?"

"Not in the least, dear girl, you were only kind and thoughtful, as you always are; but I would prefer finishing my work and enjoying my letter after," she said, with a nervous little laugh.

So Lucy said no more, but quietly helped Carry and Jeanie, so that the lessons might quickly and easily be got through, and gave as little trouble as possible to the patient governess, whom Lucy felt certain was struggling with some load of grief which

was almost more than she could bear. It was quite pain to Lucy's tender heart to know that letter was in Miss Barton's keeping, and yet she would not read it until her work was done. She could imagine what a painful effort it must be to keep her thoughts to history and geography, German and Italian, when the contents of that unopened letter were still unknown, whether it had brought joy or grief, good tidings or bad. At last the work was all done, and with real joy she saw Miss Barton go out of the school-room. That her letter was one of interest, Lucy was certain, or the pale cheek would not have grown paler at sight of it, and more and more did the kind-hearted girl love her gentle governess as she saw her struggling against some deep-seated or sad sorrow.

Once in the refuge of her own room, the door barred against intruders, Miss Barton opened her letter, read it again and again, pressed it to her burning lips, while her tears ran thick and fast on it, then taking from her bosom a little blue velvet case, she removed a letter it contained and replaced it with the new one, locking the old one carefully in a small box, which seemed nearly full of the same correspondence, then washing her face to

remove the traces of tears, she returned to the school-room, and was quietly working there when the luncheon bell rang, as though no storm of grief had but a few minutes before shaken so rudely that fragile form.

CHAPTER VII.

THE Tuesday fixed for Lady Maudesley's party was fortunately very fine, though somewhat late in the year for a garden party. Mrs. Deane was a little anxious about the girls catching cold, as of course they wanted to wear thin dresses, as more appropriate to the occasion; so the matter was finally compromised by white alpaca dresses and cloaks alike, with some white chip hats and violet-coloured feathers. Carry wore a blue silk frock and white muslin cloak, with a straw hat and white feather, and few in the grounds, it was universally acknowledged, looked better than the three Miss Deanes.

The party was a much larger one than Mrs. Deane expected, and she would have been vexed at her daughters, who were none of them yet out, joining it, had she not found that all the young people in the neighbourhood were there, down to about ten or eleven years old.

Mrs. Warleigh and her tribe were there, of course, the girls in brown Saxony cloth dresses, black silk cloaks, and brown hats, looking as unfit for the gay scene around them as possible; but that was a peculiarity of Mrs. Warleigh's. She considered it quite wrong to encourage girls in a love of dress, so clothed them in a manner which brought upon them a great deal of notice, and fixed their attention on what she wished them to forget, inducing in them, moreover, the evil spirits of anger and jealousy because they were not dressed as well as others. The scene was certainly gay and pretty, as such scenes always are, and Lady Maudesley had managed, beyond the expectations of the Deanes, at least, to provide amusement for her guests. A cow, adorned with ribbons and flowers, was tethered in the meadow, which was separated from the garden by an invisible fence, for the purpose of manufacturing syllabub. There was an Aunt Sally, croquet, lawn billiards, and bowls. A capital band, playing most inspiriting dance music, and long tables carried through the dining and drawing-rooms across the passage, with tea, coffee, fruits, ice, and all sorts of bread and cakes of every description. Her little ladyship, in a most elegant gossamer kind of dress,

Lady Maudsley's Party.

floated about amongst her friends like a little fairy, and said a few little foolish words to everyone, attended closely by young Hamersfort and another young officer, with a lisp and an incipient moustache, if possible a greater goose than his friend. Poor old heavy Sir Charles moved about in a much more ponderous style, speaking only to a few, for he did not know the half of them, and attended only by a half blind and quite deaf setter dog, who, fat and heavy like his master, moved when he moved, but took every available opportunity of lying down. There were a great many officers of young Hamersfort's regiment, for Lady Maudesley said she knew the girls liked soldiers, so that the band did not long play in vain. A dancing party soon assembled on the lawn, leaving a very small number to the delights of croquet, consisting chiefly of the smaller children, who did not care to dance, and could not have got partners if they had.

"Are you fond of dancing?" asked Jeanie's partner, by way of a new remark.

"Yes, I like it very much for a change."

"You don't like it better than anything in the whole world?"

"Oh dear, no."

"What do you like best in the whole world?"

"What occupation? I hardly know yet: I have not tried everything 'in the whole world;' but of such employments as my limited knowledge makes me acquainted with, I like reading best."

"Oh! do you? I think that's an awful bore. I never could bear reading."

"So I should think," Jeanie felt tempted to answer, but she substituted, "Not even novels?"

"Oh, well, sometimes for a change I like novels,—full of murders, and that kind of thing; but they're all alike, and I very soon get tired of them."

"What do you like best in the whole world, then?" asked Jeanie, anxious to hear the reply of her intelligent (!) companion.

"Well, I like smoking, I think, best of all. I smoke sometimes fifteen cigars a day."

"Indeed, that must be nice."

"Oh, it is. Do you smoke?"

"Me! I haven't begun yet."

"You'll like it when you do. Lots of ladies smoke now, you know, little cigarettes."

"Yes; they must look pretty smoking."

"Yes, they do—jolly; that is to say, perhaps

more than pretty. I like to see them. I hope my wife will smoke."

"Yes, it would be so delightful to smoke together, wouldn't it?" continued Jeanie, amused beyond measure to find that the bright youth could not in the least see that she was, as she would have said, "chaffing" him.

"Yes, we could. Do you think I shall ever have a wife?"

"Well, I really have not had time to think, but the next time I have the pleasure of meeting you, I will tell you what conclusion I have come to. This quadrille is over now; and as I hate parading up and down to be inspected by the company, I'll find a seat, please;" and seeing her mother and another lady on a bench near, she joined them and got rid, greatly to her satisfaction, of this bright specimen of one of her Majesty's gallant defenders.

Lucy had got on rather better. She had been fortunate in finding an agreeable, sensible young fellow, and had enjoyed her dance very much. Such a partner as Jeanie's would have been pain to her. She could not have treated him as Jeanie did, and would only have felt ashamed and sorry for him, and much worried herself, and would never have had the

courage to get rid of him summarily, as Jeanie did.

"Have you seen Annabella, Mrs. Deane?" said Mrs. Warleigh, coming up with a hot, excited-looking face to the bench she was occupying. "I have missed her this half-hour, and been looking for her everywhere."

"I saw her some time ago dancing; but I have not noticed her since the dancing stopped."

"I think it must have been her, she went down the shrubbery there with some young man," answered mischievous Jeanie.

"Alone?" asked Mrs. Warleigh, in a terrified tone.

"No; with a young man," said incorrigible Jeanie.

"But I mean alone with the young man?"

"Oh, yes; only those two."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed this painfully anxious mother, starting as if to pursue them.

"But I'm not sure, Mrs. Warleigh," said Jeanie; "it might not have been her. Let's see. What had Annabella got on—white muslin over pink?"

"No, no such nonsense; a sensible brown dress, fit for the time of year."

"Oh, then, it wasn't her. How stupid of me! Then I haven't seen her since the first part of the afternoon.'

"How provoking of her! I must go and find her."

"Really, Mrs. Warleigh, I wouldn't fatigue myself if I were you," said Mrs. Deane. "I have not seen Lucy nor Jeanie until this moment since they came. They are quite safe here."

"I don't know," she answered; and then bending her head, whispered, "there are a great many officers here."

Mrs. Deane smiled as she replied, "But they don't come with the intention of running away with all the young ladies."

"Perhaps not; but I like to keep my eye on my girl." And away she walked, not hearing the reply Mrs. Deane felt she could not help making.

"My girls do not require watching."

"Is Carry enjoying herself?" she asked, turning to Jeanie.

"Very much, mamma dear. I think she seems much brighter and merrier than she has done a long while."

"I'm glad of that. I fancied she had not been well lately, she seemed so dull."

"So we have all thought."

"Well, I have not liked to say anything about it, because it might have been my fancy, but I have been watching her anxiously."

"She's bright enough to-day, then."

"That's right. I expect your father is not much delighted."

"I believe he's gone up the river with some of the party."

"Oh, has he? He did say, perhaps he should. Then I'm sure he's all right, if he's got an oar in his hand."

"Oh, here you are, Jeanie. I've been looking for you everywhere," said Lady Maudesley, coming up to where she was seated, followed by young Hamerfort. "Mr. Hamerfort wants a partner who'll never be tired; he's danced me to death, positively. Miss Jeanie Deane, Mr. Hamerfort. There, take him, and tire him out if you can."

And sinking into the seat Jeanie vacated, she edified Mrs. Deane for a short time with her interesting conversation.

When the dance was over, Lucy and Jeanie both joined their mother, and were standing talking to her when Mrs. Warleigh appeared again.

"It is too bad. What do you think? Annabella's gone out in a boat. Fanny and Eleanor say so. They're quietly playing croquet, and she's actually gone out on the river without my leave, with a lot of young men."

"And no other ladies?"

"Oh, yes, a party of giddy girls. That comes of losing sight of your girls for a moment. It was only just while I went to see after the little ones. I'm going now to stand on the terrace and watch for her coming back." And away went the poor mistaken mother, like the hen who had hatched a duckling, quite unable to enjoy herself from her worrying anxiety about her children.

"I wonder if she's in the same boat with papa?" said Jeanie.

"She shouldn't have gone without her mother's leave," said Lucy.

"No, certainly not. Poor Mrs. Warleigh must be having a happy day."

"Yes," laughed Mrs. Deane; "I'm glad I'm not such a good mother—ain't you, girls?"

"Darling mother, you do very well for us," said Jeanie. Lucy only tenderly pressed her hand, but

she looked in her face with a loving smile which spoke volumes.

"Let us stroll down to the terrace—shall we, Lucy, and see if we see anything of the boats?" asked Jeanie. "May we, mamma?"

"Oh, certainly, love; but remember I shan't stay late, the dews are so heavy now in the evening; so be about the house where I can see you about five."

"All right, mamma dear," and away the girls went down to the pretty terrace-walk which overlooked the river, and from which a flight of steps led down to the water's edge. There stood Mrs. Warleigh, leaning over the balustrade, straining her eyes for the first symptoms of the expected boat. At last one came in sight she thought was it, and she began a vigorous amount of signs,—waving her handkerchief and her parasol, and beckoning, and even calling; but lazily the little boat came through the water, none of the crew appearing to notice the signs of the excited party on the shore. Nearer it came and nearer; the splashing of the oars could be heard, it seemed pulling towards the steps, but as it neared them the rowers put on a spurt, and passed rapidly by.

"It's too bad, Annabella, come in," screamed Mrs. Warleigh.

Lucy and Jeanie came up to her.

"I don't think Annabella was in that boat, Mrs. Warleigh," they said.

"I am sure she was. It's disgraceful conduct. She shall pay for this. I'll walk all down the bank of the river beside the boat; I declare I will. I can get out this way, can't I?"

And scrambling over a fence, without another word away she went, gesticulating in the same manner all the way.

"What is the matter?" asked two or three who were enjoying the pleasant lounge by the water-side.

"Mrs. Warleigh thought her daughter was in that boat, and wanted her to come in," answered Jeanie.

"Oh, is that all?" and they moved away, leaving Jeanie and Lucy waiting with some anxiety the termination of this adventure. At length a boat neared the landing-place, and pulled up at the steps, but that only contained Mr. Deane, two other gentlemen, and a lady.

"Oh, papa," said Jeanie, as her father landed; "have you seen anything of Annabella Warleigh?"

"Yes; we passed the boat she was in. They're a long way behind."

"There, I said that was not her." And Jeanie began eagerly to recount the history.

Mr. Deane was immensely amused, and related it for the benefit of his friends.

"You remember my saying as we passed a boat-load that that was some of our party?"

"Oh, yes, quite well; and I remarked that at that pace, and with the style of the rowing, they would not be home till night."

"Poor Mrs. Warleigh!—ha! ha! Her racing after another boat's delicious. How long on earth will she keep the chase up. But come, girls, we must be looking for mamma—she said five o'clock."

"Yes, papa, we're ready," said Lucy.

"But poor Mrs. Warleigh, is she to be left wandering on the river-bank in this manner? Ought we not to follow and tell her about Annabella?" said Jeanie.

"We'll join mamma first," answered Mr. Deane; "and when you are with her, I will send to, or see about Mrs. Warleigh."

Mrs. Deane on hearing the story, concluded it would be only kind and neighbourly to seek the poor woman, and convince her of her mistake. So putting the young ladies with their mother in the

carriage, Mr. Deane returned, to walk along the bank of the river in pursuit of Mrs. Warleigh, whom he met returning from her wild-goose chase, having just discovered her mistake. She thanked him very much, but was not to be softened about her daughter at all. She would return, she said, to the landing-place, and there await her, and no more parties should she be allowed to go to. And so Mr. Deane, finding he could be of no further use, left her, and returned home.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE next morning at breakfast, of course the conversation turned on the Warleighs.

"Poor woman, she thinks she is strictly fulfilling her duty," said Mr. Deane, "and that all mothers are but indifferently doing theirs who are not like her."

"It must be an awful worry to the girls."

"There is no doubt of it, and it is that which makes them sly and disobedient."

"I wonder what time Annabella returned after all," said Jeanie. "A dearly-bought pleasure I should have thought it to have to pay for it with such a scolding."

"Where's Miss Barton this morning?"

"She excused herself on the plea of a headache, and had a cup of tea sent to her room."

"She went for an early walk, and perhaps that

gave her a headache," said Lucy. "It always does me."

"By herself?"

"Yes, mamma, she only went to the post," said Jeanie. "She always likes to take her own letters. There's that eccentric child Carry getting red all over her face again. What is it, Carry?"

"Don't tease the child, Jeanie," said Mrs. Deane. "There is nothing more disagreeable than to have attention called to one. She's hurt her mouth again, I suppose. Carry, you must not drink your tea so hot, dear."

Carry made no reply, but handed her cup for some more milk; and no more was said.

When, an hour or two afterwards, Mrs. Deane was seated, as she was wont to do, in her morning-room, Carry asked permission to come in.

"Yes, love; what is it?"

"I want to know, mamma, if I may go and ask Mary Fisher to tea?"

"Yes, if you like. Have you finished your lessons?"

"Yes, mamma. Miss Barton's head aches so much, Lucy said I wasn't to do any more."

"Very well, then, you may go; and as you pass

old Thomas's cottage, just tell him grandmamma would like to see him this evening: she has a present for him and his old wife."

Away Carry ran, and was not a moment putting on her hat and cloak, and was through the garden into the lane before her sisters knew she was out of the house. For reasons of her own, she had not mentioned that she was going out, or asked any of her sisters to go with her.

Carry was a strange child, unlike any of the others; very reserved, with odd ideas of her own, and thoughts and fancies which she kept entirely to herself. The contents of her desk would have been interesting to inspect, full of papers on which were scraps of poetry, allegories, and fairy tales—all begun, but none finished—showing talent, all of them, which might some day develop itself more fully. Jeanie was her favourite sister, but even she was not permitted to know all Carry's thoughts and aspirations. It was to Carry, Jeanie was indebted for assistance with the epilogue, as Jeanie said she never could make anything rhyme, and that was Carry's particular *forte*.

She had made this request to invite a little friend to tea, because she could frame no other excuse to

get out, and her mind was full of a plan she had, and which she had been thinking of for days.

Mary Fisher was the doctor's only daughter—a nice little quiet girl; but Carry's chief business was not here, so she stayed only a moment with her little friend, bidding her come early, and then ran quickly on down a lane, until she came to the vicarage,—a lovely, peaceful, sweet place, such as should be the home of a clergyman and his family, —not ostentatiously large, but commodious enough to insure neatness and order in its inmates, with a garden large enough to supply the house with fruit and vegetables, a stable-yard and coach-house, poultry-yard, and a nice paddock for a cow, at the bottom of which meandered a pretty little stream, with some fine trees on its banks, beneath which the parson and his children, on warm summer evenings, sat fishing and reading.

At this pretty home Carry stopped and rang the bell, waiting with a beating heart until the door was opened, and she summoned courage to ask the servant if the vicar was at home, and if she might speak to him alone.

She was conducted, therefore, into his library, and there left to await his arrival.

"What has become of Carry?" asked Jeanie, as she entered the school-room, about an hour after Carry had started. "I want her, and I cannot find her anywhere."

"Mamma said she had asked leave to go and invite Mary Fisher to tea. I suppose she's stopping to play there."

"I want my paint-box I lent her, and I can't find it anywhere; I can't think where she can have put it."

"What are you going to do?"

"Why, I'm going to do a text for Miss Barton, I promised her."

Lucy smiled.

"Now, what are you smiling for, Lucy? I believe you think I shall never finish it."

"Some such thought was running in my mind, I own. Where are the little wrestlers you began for May?—where are the set of baby things for Mrs. Kemble?—the border of the table-cloth for mamma?"—

"Don't, don't," said Jeanie, stopping her ears; "you frighten me. Circumstances over which I had no control, have, I assure you, prevented my completing any of those interesting works of art. The wrestlers had a most perverse dislike to wearing their heads, and I thought May would never realise

that they *were* little men *without* heads; the baby things are nearly all done, but I want the pattern of the shoe, which I can't get sent me; the border is waiting for a peculiar shade of wool which I invariably forget to buy."

"And about the ferns, after which you toiled for three successive days, and which a day or two back I saw May's kitten playing with?"

"Yes, I know, the horrid little wretch! They tumbled out of the book I was drying them in somehow or other, and the nasty thing has bitten and torn them to pieces."

"Then what are you going to do with all the paper you got to make the book for the collection?"

"Oh, I shall begin again some day, when I'm in the vein; and so I shall keep the paper until then."

"Oh! Jeanie, Jeanie! I wish you would learn to finish one thing before you begin another."

"I've come to the conclusion that, as the boy said, Lucy, 'what's nature is natural,' and you can no more make me wise, clever, thoughtful, and steady like you, than you can make the leopard change his spots."

"But you are clever, Jeanie, darling—much more clever than I am—sweet-tempered, and affectionate;

but you will not steady yourself, and do things by rule."

"Oh, Lucy, if you knew how I hated rules and method, and all those horrid dry sort of things!"

"They are dry and hard at first, and irksome to persist in; but the comfort they buy for us, Jeanie! Why, I know where every single thing is belonging to me, and can find what I want in the dark. I have fixed days to put all my places in order, and dusting out my drawers and desk, and tearing up old letters and papers, and that keeps them always neat and orderly. You know, dear, how troubled you are to find your fresh exercise; it's always thrown into the drawer with your old ones. Your pieces are crammed in the bottom of a drawer, all huddled together, so that you cannot tell one from the other. Now, look here," and opening a little miniature chest of drawers which used to belong to her doll, but in which now she kept her work and "knick-knacks," she displayed the one she called her "piece drawer," to Jeanie. There, in different rolls, were scraps of each shade of coloured material and woollen pieces, linen, calico, flannel, holland, prints, silks—black in one roll, coloured in another—and a box in which were skeins of wool and silk, commenced, but not all

used, and paper patterns for different things, all pinned together and written on.

"I know. I see you 'fadding' about, and wonder how you can. It gives me the fidgets to see you. How I should feel if I had to do it, I can't think."

"Why, much more comfortable, after a bit, I'm sure, Jeanie dear; you spend as much money as I do, yet you never have anything to use; you're always wanting to borrow my things, and you have just the same, only you never can find them."

"'True, O king,' and I tell you, dear, I fear I shall never alter; but this is not finding my paint-box; what has that monkey done with it?"

"Have you looked in the bedroom?"

"Yes, it's not there; it must be somewhere here."

"Or in the play-room, perhaps?"

"I have not looked there, but I certainly never will lend Carry my box again, if it is, in there for May to play with."

"Darling little May would not play with it, I am sure; she would know it was yours, and not to be touched."

"Well, I think May is rather old-fashioned and methodical like you, certainly. However, I'll go down and see. What a tremendous time Carry is out."

Just as Jeanie went down the back stairs which led to the playroom, she heard the visitors' bell ring, and surprised at such early callers, she stopped to ask who it was?"

"The clergyman, miss, and Miss Carry."

"The clergyman, Mr. Walker, and Miss Carry together?"

"Yes, miss; at least I let them in together."

"I suppose he met her and walked with her," thought Jeanie, and proceeding to the playroom discovered her paint-box quite safe from May's depredations, and carrying it off to the school-room she began her text, and thought no more of the visitor.

In Mrs. Deane's morning-room sat Mr. Walker, with Carry beside him. Mrs. Deane was listening intently, and with a wondering face, to the statements Mr. Walker was making.

"And what, my dear child," she said, at length, "induced you to go to Mr. Walker instead of coming to me?"

"I was afraid you would send Miss Barton away, and that it would be all through me," said Carry, through her tears. "I have been so unhappy, I have not known what to do."

"She has chosen a highly orthodox way of obtaining comfort and advice," said Mr. Walker, smiling kindly, and placing his hand on the little girl's head; "but, my little one, whilst you are blessed with a kind father and mother, you should at all times seek their advice in your little troubles; but it appears, Mrs. Deane, as I understand her, that she feared her revealing the secret she had discovered in so wrong a way, might lead to the dismissal of her governess, to whom she seems much attached."

"Yes, that was it indeed, mamma, and I thought Mr. Walker would tell me what was right to do."

"He has, I hope, my child, by bringing you to mamma," said Mr. Walker, "where I shall now leave you; it is a matter in which I can have no right to interfere. I am sure the poor little girl has suffered very much from her curiosity, and I think will never so err again. I cannot help you that I see in this matter, can I?"

"No, Mr. Walker, thank you, I think not. I believe there is but one course to pursue—the honest and straightforward one—tell Miss Barton we have discovered her secret, and in what manner. I have no doubt she can explain her reasons for keeping all

this concealed from us, and if these are satisfactorily explained I see no occasion to part with her if she is willing to stay."

"Certainly, that seems to me quite the right course to pursue. And now I will wish you good morning. I am sure I am proud of the confidence one member of your family at least honours me with, and trust I may reckon on the rest if at any time I can serve them."

"You are very kind, Mr. Walker; I should not fail to apply to you."

As soon as Mr. Walker was gone, Mrs. Deane called Carry to her, who had stood looking sad and ashamed, scarcely daring to raise her eyes to her mother's face.

"Carry, how could you, my dear little girl, forget any feeling of honour and honesty so completely as not only to read a private journal, in itself disgraceful, but to remove it from the desk where it was locked up with your own key! My dear child, the more I reflect on it and put it into words, the more dreadful it seems."

"I know all you say is true, mamma dear," said Carry, throwing her arms round her mother's neck and weeping bitterly, "and I cannot think what

made me do it, but a curiosity I could not control. I did so long to know what there could be in the diary that should make her so distressed at our reading it, and I thought I should find what it is that makes her so sad, and seems so disturbed when she gets foreign letters, which she does every month. I know it was dreadfully naughty. I am sure I have never been happy since in her presence. I have sometimes forgotten it, and been merry when I have not seen her, but the sight of her sad face or the mention of her since, has made me feel—Oh! I can't tell you how, mamma. I had heard of people going to clergymen for comfort and advice, and so I made up my mind to go and ask Mr. Walker what I should do."

"And you have told no one else,—not your sisters?"

"No, mamma, I thought it was wicked enough of me to read her secret, it would have been worse to betray it, but Mr. Walker said it was my duty to tell you, that's what I wanted to know."

"Well, my dear girl, I can give you no severer punishment than your own feelings; all I must insist on is, your confessing before me all to Miss Barton, and your making her a humble apology. I

shall first go and talk to grandmamma, and then tell you what to do. Stay here until I return."

Mrs. Deane, in all difficulties, went at once to grandmamma, and generally found good and wise counsel. She wanted now to know if it would be better first to speak to Miss Barton herself, or send Carry to her with her apology. Grandmamma advised her first seeing Miss Barton, and begged Mrs. Deane would kindly, as soon as possible, let her know the result, as she was much attached to the poor girl, and would have been greatly sorry to hear she was going to leave. Mrs. Deane dreaded the interview, but as there was no alternative, she thought it was best to do it at once, and accordingly telling Carry to go and dry her eyes and join her sisters till she sent for her, she rang the bell, and told the servant to acquaint Miss Barton that she wanted to speak to her.

"Do you want me?" she asked, as she entered the room.

"I do. I hope I am not disturbing you from any employment, for I want a long talk with you?"

"No, indeed, I have been quite idle, from a tendency to headache, which made kind Lucy persuade me to close the studies earlier to-day."

"Exactly; sit down then, will you? A somewhat unpleasant duty devolves on me, and as I shall pain you, I pain myself in doing so."

In an instant the blood forsook the face and lips of her listener, as she answered in an almost inaudible voice,—

"I am used to pain—speak on."

"It grieves me the more, naturally, to know that I have learned a secret of yours through a misdemeanor of one of my own children. She is, I am sure, bitterly sorry, and will tell you so presently. You are married, Miss Barton, and some sad circumstances are connected with that marriage. Why it has pleased you to keep the matter concealed, I know not. I can only say, that if it is in your power to explain all this satisfactorily, and you wish to remain with me, I see no reason why you should not."

Mrs. Deane paused as if for an answer. Miss Barton, who had sat with her small delicate fingers closely interlaced, and her lips compressed as though trying to bear some great suffering without an exclamation, said, in her deliberate accents,—

"If you will let me, I will tell you all, and then leave your house if you deem it necessary."

"Go on, I beg," said Mrs. Deane, "and depend on finding a friend in me. I cannot believe you have deserved to lose my friendship. Let me first give orders that I am not to be intruded on, and then you shall tell me all you wish."

Mrs. Deane left the room, and returned in a few moments, bringing with her a glass of wine, which she made Miss Barton drink, and then telling her no one would interrupt them, she sat down beside her, and said:—

"Now tell me all you wish."

Miss Barton began.

"My father was a farmer of ample means in Yorkshire. We had a fine farm, and lived in comfort and luxury, knowing nothing of want or sorrow but their names. I had a sister some few years older than myself, and, with my father and mother, that formed our small household. She was pretty; oh, so pretty! Dear Eva—people could not pass her without turning to look once more at her beautiful face. Of course she was the idol of every one—beauty purchases so many friends. There came to our house one day a young man with a dog and gun, saying he had been shooting for many hours, and was so tired and exhausted, would we let him

rest, and give him a drink of milk. I spoke to him first, and bid him come in and rest by all means, showed him into the large best parlour, as we called it, and called my sister to bring him the milk he asked for. I saw the start of surprise with which he regarded her—it was so intent, that she blushed and turned away. He sat some time chatting, and then, with many polite words of thanks, went away. At dusk that evening, as I sat in the parlour, looking through the casement window at the stars, and thinking of the stranger, and how he had started at Eva, the regular tramp of feet up the gravel path startled me, it was so regular and unusual. I ran to the door, and in the fading light saw four men carrying something in their arms. One of the foremost men was a labourer of our own.

"'Miss,' he said, 'here's been an accident; we must bring this gentleman in, and get a doctor.'

"It was our visitor of an hour or two ago, badly hurt in the hand by the explosion of his gun. He had fainted, and the labourers in the field had found him. For days he remained in our house, nursed by my mother and our two selves. You can imagine the rest: the story is an old one. I felt sure, beside my beautiful sister, I had no chance to win the love

I should have been so proud to gain; but when he left our house, he took my heart with him. I believed my sister felt the same; and we never spoke of him. When he left, he said, if his life was spared he should visit us again in the following autumn; and I counted the months till he came. He had written us several letters in the meanwhile, and sent my mother a handsome present for her care of him. My father had told him he must not think of going to the inn, but make our place his head-quarters. He came, as I have said; and before he had been there many days, I fancied I saw there was no hope for me. Hastily I determined to leave a scene which only tortured me, and got my mother's somewhat unwilling permission to go and keep house for an old maiden aunt who had often written to beg me to do so. I pleaded the dulness of the country —how little I was needed at home—what comfort I could be to the poor lonely old woman. She lived in the city, in the shadow of the cathedral; and there, before his visits ended, I went. My sister wrote often, and in each letter I expected to hear they were engaged; but no, she only said in one, he seemed dull and absent, and not so merry nearly as he was; and in the next, that he was gone—

nothing more. You can imagine, dear Mrs. Deane, better than I can describe, my astonishment, when one day I was summoned to speak to a gentleman, asking for me; and I was ushered into his presence. It was not my sister he loved! I need not detain you, with the minute particulars, my good old aunt's kindness, and, through her grief at losing me, her pleasure that I should be happy. She said I deserved it. And oh, Mrs. Deane, a happier, prouder wife, never left God's holy house, than I on that bright winter morning when he made me his. My sister was our bridesmaid, and laughed gaily at the mistake I had made. She thought he made a famous brother, but never dreamt of him for a husband; and so we parted gaily, never dreaming of the dark days to come.

"My husband was a solicitor in good practice in London, and he took me to a pretty home, where I was happy as the day was long. My first grief was the sudden death of my father, and the consequent breaking up of the dear old place. Everything was sold, and my dear mother came with Eva to settle in the place where she passed her own early years, and where she still is. Eva soon married the curate there, who had obtained an Indian chaplaincy, and

she went out with him there. Many and many a Sunday after did my husband and myself go down and spend the day with my mother, to cheer her in her loneliness. Such happy, peaceful days; but the storm was coming. One day my husband was arrested on a charge of forgery. A large cheque had been presented at the bank in the name of a rich client, and a junior clerk witnessed against my husband that he had seen him copying the signature on a piece of paper. The paper was produced in court; Ernest could not deny it; he had, at the suggestion of this young man, passed a few idle moments in imitating various handwritings, and being most successful in that of this particular client, had written the signature several times over. The messenger of the office stated that one of the gentlemen gave him the cheque to get cashed, and that he had given the money to Mr. Bridgmont in the passage when he returned; it was almost dark, he admitted, but still he was sure it was my husband. No further evidence was needed, and my good, true, honest Ernest was sentenced to transportation for life."

A paroxysm of weeping prevented the poor governess from further utterance for some time. Mrs.

Deane rose and tenderly supported her head on her bosom, as though she had been a child of her own; and Miss Barton could feel the warm tears of sympathy falling on her bowed head. After a few minutes she controlled her feelings sufficiently to go on.

"After our parting, I went to my poor mother, and there our little child was born. How I prized her—how in her dear face I could trace one still dearer—and how I watched and loved her, I need not say; suffice it that God deemed my trial not enough, and in His wisdom chose to take my darling from me. It died at two months old. As soon as I could, after I had overcome in some measure this second grief, I determined not to burden my mother longer, but to seek employment as a governess. Your situation offered itself, and resuming my maiden name, I wrote to you. My mother wished me to call myself a widow, but I could not bear to do that. To know that he lives, and to cling to the hope of his one day being righted, is what I live for. I could not bear to feign to be what I feel I could not live to be. I can write to him and he to me, and that shadow of my past happiness I cling to like my life. Oh, Mrs. Deane, is it because I have loved him too much I am so hardly tried?" And with a look of piteous

sorrow the poor girl gazed in Mrs. Deane's face. She had no voice to answer her with; tears of sympathy were raining down her cheeks. After a moment's pause, Miss Barton continued:—"You can now understand why I have kept this matter concealed. I feared neither you nor any lady would take me if they knew all my history,—the wife of a convict! Innocent as I know him to be, I have no power to prove him so. Would my belief in it make others believe it also? I could not bear to burden my mother's slender income, and so hoped to earn my own livelihood, and assist her also. But it must be as you please, an accident having thus revealed all, I am ready to leave at once if you wish it."

"Indeed, no, my poor girl," Mrs. Deane now found voice to say; "you shall never leave my house but by your own will. Your sad position must claim the sympathy of every one; and as long as you are happy, stay here. Carry will come now and kiss you, if you will allow her, and make a proper apology for her conduct."

"Carry! It was Jeanie, I thought," said Miss Barton.

"No, it was Carry."

"Not Carry, who made the drawings in my book, surely."

"Drawings? Oh, I know nothing of drawings. Carry, in her confession, merely said that curiosity induced her to open your desk with her own key, and read the diary."

"Carry did? This is the first I have heard of it. Jeanie took my book up, which I incautiously left on the table, and made some drawings in it, and I imagined that she had read it, until the other day Lucy assured me she had not read it at all—only glanced at a word here and there. I never knew this of Carry. It is through her, then, this has been discovered."

"It is, indeed; and I greatly grieve that she should have been guilty of so mean an act. I think, however, she is severely punished by her own feelings, and if you will kindly forgive her she will not ever be guilty of so disgraceful an act again, I really believe."

"Oh, poor child! I will willingly forgive her, especially as through your kindness her act has entailed on me no unhappy consequences. Gladly will I stay in a home where I have been as happy as one in my position can hope to be."

"Then we will consider that settled, and drop the sad subject, unless at any time I can aid or counsel you, or you wish to speak to me on it. Now I will send Carry to you; and then, as I am sure this conversation cannot have improved your headache, you must seek the quiet of your room for the rest of the day."

Mrs. Deane, after sending Carry to Miss Barton, went to grandmamma to tell her the result of the interview, and also to her two eldest girls. To them she merely said what Carry had discovered—namely, Miss Barton's marriage—and the loss of her only child, and that she was parted from her husband under sad circumstances; that she trusted, therefore, the girls would treat her with every sort of consideration, and give her as little trouble as possible. This of course they both promised to do, and the little domestic drama lasted them as a subject of conversation for that and many days to come.

Old Mrs. Deane was deeply interested in the matter, and hoped that, when she felt equal to it, Miss Barton would allow her to see her, that she might personally express her interest and sympathy.

This message having been given to her, Miss

Barton, who with all the rest of the house dearly loved and respected grandmamma, went to her room as soon as she rose from the hour or two's rest, which Mrs. Deane had insisted on. At her entrance the good old lady rose from her chair, as though there was a sanctity in such heavy sorrow that claimed respect; and, holding out both her hands, took Miss Barton's trembling ones in hers, and pressed them kindly; then seating her in the chair beside her, she said, "My child, God has dealt heavily with you; but you are too good and sensible not to draw from it the highest consolation. 'Whom He loveth, He chasteneth.'"

"That is all that has helped me to bear it, madam, I believe."

"Yes; it's a fine thought, and makes one feel brave to bear more and more, if His love is to come with it. Great will be the joy of those who through much 'tribulation have entered the kingdom of heaven.' Though God's ways are inscrutable, and many of them past finding out, still I believe that the eye of Faith is allowed to pierce the veil of clouds, and see why the sorrow has been sent them, and how in mercy each heavy blow has been dealt. That you, my dear young lady, may be comforted, and permitted to see this trial has been but a

blessing in disguise, I heartily pray. You know," she continued, in a lighter tone, "I am a very hopeful old lady, and I have the firmest belief that right always triumphs in the end. You will see your husband righted,—mark my words."

"Oh! if I could see him restored to his former position, and his name once more honoured, I would be content to die."

"Oh dear, no; there must be no dying in the matter: you must be brave and strong for his sake, and live to make his life happy. Now, like a good girl, have faith in the promise, 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you.' When has He ever deserted any who trusted in Him? And think how much happier you are than if your husband deserved the punishment. Think, if he were really guilty, how would you feel!"

"Yes, that would be worse, indeed."

"Of course it would. There is nothing so bad that it might not be worse; and when I have been tempted to give way to despondency, in those trials which in a long life must come to us all, I have put this before me, and, in my gratitude that it was *not* worse, found my troubles grow less. I have every hope and belief that these clouds will roll away, and

leave your hemisphere brighter than ever. In the meanwhile, here you have a home, which will, I hope, be a happy one to you, as long as you like to remain in it."

"It is a happy one, dear Mrs. Deane; but it adds sometimes to my misery to know how great is the contrast between his life and mine."

"Think, on the contrary, how much it would add to his sorrow to know you were unhappy, and how much it must comfort him to know that, instead of a miserable life, struggling for existence, you are safe in a respectable family."

"He says it does comfort him much."

"That's well. In your next letter, tell him we know all,—that he has our deep sympathy and our prayers that he may be able to prove his innocence. And now I will not trouble you with an old woman's chatter any more, but wish you good-night, and may God bless you!" laying her hand solemnly on Miss Barton's head as she uttered these words. Miss Barton seized it as she withdrew it, and kissed it warmly, and retired to her own room soothed and cheered, more than she could have hoped or believed, by this interview.

CHAPTER IX.

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Carry, with the burden off her mind, and forgiven by Miss Barton, was the merry little girl of old again; and poor Miss Barton herself, no longer weighed down by a secret, and inspired through old Mrs. Deane with hope, felt calmer and happier than she had done since her first sad sorrow; so that in a day or two things had fallen into their usual train.

They had heard nothing of the Warleighs since Lady Maudesley's party, and were wondering how Annabella had got on. They were thinking of going to call and see, when Mrs. Warleigh herself anticipated them by coming to Oatlands. Lucy was with her mother in the drawing-room when she arrived, and so could impart the desired information to Jeanie, who was dying with curiosity to know what was the result of Annabella's indiscretion. Mrs. Warleigh seemed as though it was the sole purpose of her visit, for she began about it directly.

"A nice treat I had at Lady Maudesley's. I never was at such a party in my life."

"Did you not like it? We all thought it so agreeable," said Mrs. Deane.

"Oh, it wasn't so much the fault of the party, but that tiresome girl of mine leading me such a dance. It was dusk before she got in nearly. However, I've paid her out. She's been in her room ever since. She declares she'll run away; but there's no fear. She would not run far."

"A strong measure for you to take with a girl of her age," said Mrs. Deane.

"If she behaves like a naughty, disobedient, unreasoning child, she must be treated like one; that's my way. She was old enough to know better."

"You'll want a governess now," said Mrs. Deane, smiling.

"Not I. They're bad enough now; what would they be with a governess? Why, there's an old friend of mine, Justice Hall. A nice set out they had in their family with a governess. She ran away with the music master, and used to bribe her pupils, by letting them off their studies, to give him letters from her. That was one way of improving their morals."

"Oh, I don't for a moment say there are not very bad governesses to be found, and many of them very unfit for their duties; but I do say, that there are good ones to be had by searching for them, and that they are an immense comfort and assistance to the mother. I do not think it is well for girls to be too much alone; and, till they are out in society, they cannot be always with their mother. For instance, at our late dinner, what would become of Carry? She is too old for the nursery; here she sits with Miss Barton in the drawing-room till we come out, and I know she is safe and amused. If I go out to dinner, or any other entertainment, the girls have Miss Barton to take charge of them, and be a companion to them."

"I never go anywhere, because I won't leave them."

"Well, is that quite fair to your husband, or doing your duty to society? By-and-by, when you want your girls to appear, you will have lost all your friends, and there will be no parties for them to go to."

"I don't care, they're best at home; they get very little good in society—it's all heartless folly, and vanity, and worldliness. I'm sure I've heard

you say it's quite wrong for a mother to leave her children to nurses and governesses."

"So I still say and think, to leave them entirely to the care of others is not fulfilling a mother's duty. She needs to be for ever watchful over them, and see that the duties of nursery and schoolroom are fulfilled, and by such diligent watchfulness she will bring them into such order, that the whole machinery will move as if guided by one hand and head. Nurses and governesses will fall into her ways, and become what they should be, useful assistants to the mother, not, as they too often are, usurpers of her place."

"Oh, well, I think that's a distinction without a difference. I look after my own, and always shall, till the boys are out in the world, and the girls married. However, I must go now, and see after my culprit—good-bye."

"Good-bye. I hope Annabella will not have run away," said Mrs. Deane, smiling.

"Oh, no fear. Good-bye;" and away went the fussy anxious mother—in her heart really alarmed that Annabella would carry out her threat. Her fears were too surely verified; for though she found her safe on the return from her call, the next morn-

ing the servant, in alarm, announced that Miss Annabella was not in her room, and her bed had not been slept in.

"Provoke not your children to wrath," said Mrs. Deane, when the news reached Oatlands, which it soon did, for Mrs. Warleigh sent there at once, hoping her truant daughter had taken refuge there. But much sadder news awaited her; the foolish girl had left her home with an equally foolish boy, about a year older than herself, as they were informed by a letter written in the most romantic style, about her wretched home, where no one cared for her, and the deep devotion of him to whom she now intended to unite herself, that to pursue them would be needless, as they had taken every precautionary measure; and so farewell for ever.

Poor Mrs. Warleigh was distracted; in every way it was dreadful. She felt now how fully the laugh would be against her—she who had so bragged about her management of her children. However, there was nothing to be done but put the matter into the hands of the police, who very soon captured the fugitives, and brought Miss Annabella ingloriously and unromantically back in a cab from the station, where they were about to take tickets for

Liverpool "en route" to America. What they intended doing when they got there did not appear. It seemed that an old servant of the young man's took Annabella in for the night, and was to accompany them to Liverpool, where they purposed being married; as they fancied there would be less fear of detection.

Very silly they both looked when the policeman suddenly took possession of the young lady, and sad was the scene of passion and violence between the mother and daughter on her arrival at home. She declared nothing would induce her to stay; she should run away again on the first opportunity, and her devoted Algernon would be always ready to offer her a home. But unhappily for the young lady, "devoted Algernon" had received rather a check to his feelings, and had led him to think better of it; so that when three frantic love-letters remained unanswered, Annabella began to think it was a hopeless case, and so sulkily resigned herself to her hard fate at home. Mrs. Deane was too much of a lady, and too good a Christian (are they not synonymous) to triumph over Mrs. Warleigh in her misfortune. She really condoled with her in her anxiety, and did her best to comfort her.

A month or two passed on, and nothing more occurred to disturb the serenity of the little party at Oatlands, save that Miss Barton had been uneasy at missing, for the first time, a letter by the mail. They had endeavoured to console her by assurance that there was some mistake, and that she would have two next time; but that was poor consolation.

The days were growing short and cold, and Christmas began to be talked of, and the boys coming home from school: they were expected on the 15th of December. One cold, raw morning, towards the end of November, Miss Barton came into Mrs. Deane's morning room, with an open letter in her hand.

"I am come," she said, "to prefer a rather unseasonable request, I fear. I have just received these few lines from my mother, begging me to come home immediately. So near the holidays, I scarcely like asking, and yet the note seems so urgent."

Mrs. Deane read the note Miss Barton handed her; and, giving it back, said:

"Oh, you can go certainly, Miss Barton. I am sure your requests for holidays are not so numerous that we must begrudge them to you: go by all means."

"I cannot understand what my mother wants;

she is not ill, by the style of her note; besides, I am sure she would not send for me, unless she was so seriously ill as to be unable to write herself. I can't understand it."

"Well, you must go and find the mystery out," said Mrs. Deane, smiling. "How can you go?"

"I can walk into the town and catch the carrier's cart, which fortunately goes that way to-day; if I get there by half-past eleven I shall just be in time."

"It is a wretched morning. I will send the ponies with you as far as the town."

"Oh, thank you very much. Then I need not start for some time yet. I can take Carry's German lessons, and hear her practise first."

"Very well; but you need not worry yourself. A holiday more or less will not hurt any of them. Then you return to-morrow?"

"Yes; I cannot before."

"No, I know; but I mean you do not wish for more than the one day."

"I can scarcely tell until I get home. You see, my mother only says, 'Come home at once, I want you particularly.'"

"Yes, I see. Well, if you stay over to-morrow you have only to drop me a line not to expect you."

"Thank you very much. I will do so." And Miss Barton left the room to prepare for her unexpected visit.

She could not help feeling great anxiety to get home, as it was such an unusual circumstance her mother sending for her; and never had the ponies seemed to trot so slowly, or the carrier's van to lumber along so wearily, as on this day. At length the Common was in sight; she could see the tall poplars before her mother's house; the door opens, her mother has heard the rumbling of the shaky old vehicle, and is out waiting to receive her.

"Come along, dear. Here you are then;" and there's a trembling in the voice, and a nervous hurried manner which seems strange to Miss Barton, as she follows her mother into the little parlour. Then there seem to be whisperings and hurrying to and fro in the small passage, as though some unusual bustle and excitement had disturbed the quiet household. Her heart begins to beat quickly as she looks searchingly in her mother's face and says—

"What is it, mother? What's the matter?"

"Nothing at all, love, only—only—sit down and take your bonnet off, and then I'll tell you."

"Oh, mother, has something dreadful happened?"

"No, indeed, love,—only—only—that a friend of your husband's has come. There—I'll tell you at once, not to keep you in suspense; and he wants to see you, and tell you all about him."

Miss Barton grew deadly pale as she seized her mother's hand, and could scarcely find voice to say:

"Let me see him at once."

"You shall, dear; I will fetch him. Now, Margaret, be brave—you won't faint, will you?"

"No, no, mother—quick, in pity."

Her mother was not a second scarcely ere she returned, bringing with her a tall, dark, gentlemanly man, who bowed gravely as Mrs. Barton said—

"My daughter."

Was there some wild desperate hope in that poor heart, that at sight of a total stranger she fell back into the chair, from which she had started eagerly, and bowed coldly in acknowledgment.

"Now, you will tell Margaret about Ernest, won't you?"

"All I know I shall be most happy to say," said the stranger, as he drew a chair near her. "The best news is that he is quite well."

"Thank God!" she murmured.

"And better still, happy. For—and that is what I am here to tell you—there is a hope, a strong hope, mind, that the cruel wrong that has been done him will be repaired. He has had two long letters from his late partner, and the gentleman he was supposed to have robbed, stating that suspicious circumstances have pointed to another man—the junior clerk, who bore witness against your husband. In the last letter, Mr. Maclellan said if the case could be substantiated, he should apply at once to the Home Secretary for your husband's immediate release."

She drank in every word eagerly, yet still she seemed listening to something beyond the tones of his voice. Mrs. Barton stood at the back of his chair, her eyes fixed on her daughter's face, watching her with painful anxiety.

"He takes great heart and hope from this," continued the stranger. "And bade me be sure to see you, and give you his dear love, and tell you to hope too."

"And how long will there be to wait before I can know for certain?" she asked.

"I hardly know. It may be that he would come off and be here in England as soon as his letter.

And I don't think he could rest out there one minute after he knew that he was free; he could not wait to write."

Mrs. Barton looked round to the door anxiously at that moment, and Margaret, still drinking in every word he said, seemed listening to something beyond the tones of his voice.

"He is a fine, noble fellow, and he has my best wishes for his safe return to England, and a happy life here. He has won the good opinion of all out there." Still drinking in every word he said, Margaret heard a sound beyond the tones of his voice, the door opened slowly and there stood a figure in the doorway.

Margaret rose slowly from her seat, with distended nostrils and starting eyes, like a frightened animal, and then with a shriek which rang through the house, flew into the extended arms of her husband.

"I knew it," she said, as she clung closer and closer to him. "I felt he was in the house. His step would have awaked me almost from death. Ernest, my life! my treasure! Oh, this joy will kill me!" And, but for the strong arms which held her in a close embrace, her lifeless form would have sunk to the ground.

They laid her tenderly on the sofa, and chafed her hands and temples; but it was long ere the eyelids beginning to tremble—gave signs of returning consciousness.

Even her mother's hot tears raining on her face did not at first move her; but at length the lids were raised, and with another cry of—"It is no dream!" she flung her arms round the kneeling figure of her husband; and for some hours she could say little or nothing—only lie back in his arms, looking at him, making sure it was the dear face beside her whose lineaments were graven on her heart. It is well that the common phases of life—the eating and drinking—must go on, in spite of all; that the dinner is still brought to table and quietly announced even in the midst of our bitterest griefs. It is wonderful how these simple, practical things sober us, and so the announcement of old Martha, somewhat crossly delivered, of "Dinner's a getting cold," brought the excitement to a sudden standstill.

Perhaps it was a mere form that going in to dinner. Nobody really wanted to eat, but it did them all good; and afterwards, with their chairs drawn round the fire, her hand still clasped in her

husband's (Margaret seemed to fear to let it go), they could talk quietly and rationally of the sad days gone by, and paint dreams of that future which, with its brightness, should make them all forget the past. Then Margaret was told of all more circumstantially: of how the clerk had, by several small things, aroused the suspicion of the head of the firm; and how, beginning to perceive that he was suspected, he had committed suicide, leaving a written confession of his crime and a justification of the unfortunate man who had been so cruelly made to suffer for the sin of another. Application being instantly made to the Home Secretary, an order was sent for the immediate release of Ernest Bridgenorth, and Mr. Markham with the other partner had met him on his landing, and begged him instantly after his meeting with his wife to return to London, and take again his position amongst them. The letter he had written to break the news to his wife she had unfortunately never received, or she would have been better prepared. Fearing the possibility of such a thing, he had taken the precaution to write to Mrs. Barton, announcing his arrival in England, and begging her to send for his dear wife, and he would

come direct to her house. Mrs. Barton wrote at once, and awaited with intense anxiety the arrival of both of them. Ernest arrived late in the evening, bringing with him a friend whom he had made acquaintance with on his voyage, and who most kindly consented to go with him down to the village where Mrs. Barton lived, and go to the house first without him, while he remained at the inn. It was possible Margaret might be there, and he could not be too careful. His friend soon returned to tell him his wife was not there, but Mrs. Barton was anxious to see him at once; and so together they returned to the little cottage. Ernest could hardly restrain his impatience to see his darling Margaret till the next morning; but Mrs. Barton assured him it would be better to do so, and persuaded him to allow the matter to be arranged as we have related, for she felt that joy was sometimes harder to bear than grief, and needed to be as much prepared for.

They had much to talk over and settle of future plans, and Margaret asked her mother to write to Mrs. Deane telling her the whole story, and saying if she would kindly allow her one more day she would then return until the holidays, as she could

not think of putting her to the slightest inconvenience, after her great kindness.

Few things are more dreadful than the waking in the morning when some present or anticipated sorrow is weighing on our hearts; but how wonderful the relief when the sorrow is gone, and we wake to the blessed consciousness that we are free from the load that has oppressed us so long. How much brighter the sunshine seems, how doubly glad the songs of the birds, as though all nature was rejoicing in our joy. So did poor Margaret feel when she opened her eyes on the following morning, and knew that her husband, from whom she had been so long parted, and sorrowed for as one dead, was again restored to her. She seemed to have received a new life, and the morning being bright and frosty, Ernest proposed a walk over the common, and of course to the church, together, to visit the little resting-place of their darling, whom the father had never seen on earth, but whom his hope was to see one day "a fair young maiden in her Father's mansion."

A few silent tears fell on the little grave, but there was no more passionate weeping. When last Margaret visited it, despair and desolation were in her

heart; now it seemed to her as though there could be no more sorrow on earth. Ernest was beside her once again. She could hear the music of that voice, and look up in the true, loving eyes. What could harm or pain her now? They walked home again to the humble little cottage, which to Margaret might be a palace or a hovel, she cared not: Ernest was there. And they had a happy, ay, even a merry breakfast. The friend who had accompanied Ernest had slept at the inn, and was going to leave by an early train. Thanking him warmly for his kind offices, Ernest went to the station to see him off; foolish little Margaret wishing, yet ashamed to say, she should like to go too, that she might not lose sight of Ernest, even for that short time. However, she watched them until they were out of sight, and watched again for his coming back, running out on the Common to meet him, and holding his hand again, as she had done the night before.

They had only been in a few moments when a messenger on horseback arrived from Oatlands with a letter, which eagerly opening, her husband leaning over her shoulder, they together read the following:—

"My dear Miss Barton,—(It is difficult to give up the old familiar appellation), it was with feelings of genuine delight we read your mother's letter, and in my own name, and in that of my family, I beg to offer you most hearty congratulations, and to beg that you and your husband will both come to Oatlands as soon as you can make it convenient, no longer as our governess, but as an honoured guest and friend. Sorry as we shall be to lose you in the former capacity, we shall be still more glad to receive you in the other, and trust that you and Mr. Bridgenorth will make Oatlands your home as long as it is agreeable, and till those arrangements of a house and furniture, &c., which I presume are necessary, are made, and you can take possession of your new home. The dear girls are all longing to see and congratulate you, and we shall be glad to know by the bearer what day we may expect you. Will you make my compliments to Mrs. Barton, and thank her for her letter, and apologise for my not replying to her, but I could not refrain from expressing to you our heartfelt pleasure at the cessation of the torturing sorrow you have borne so long and so patiently. With kind regards to

your husband, whose acquaintance we trust shortly to make,

"Believe me, dear friend,

"Yours most sincerely,

"A. DEANE."

"Is she not kind and good?" said Margaret, raising her streaming eyes to her husband's face.

"She does indeed seem so. We will go certainly. I am so glad she does not want you to go, as you proposed. I don't know how I could have parted with you again."

"I scarcely know how I should have borne it either, love; but her extreme kindness and consideration merited that I should make her the offer."

"Decidedly. Well, we must answer the note, and I think we had better say we will go to-morrow. I propose to go to lodgings first, and look about us for a house. We shall not get the dear old one, I fear, again. Then your mother can come and spend a long time with us when we are once settled. You do not wish to remain with her or at Oatlands whilst I am house-hunting, do you?"

"Ernest, of course not."

"Then write a line, and say to-morrow."

"So soon!" said Mrs. Barton, as she entered the room. "Are they come to say you must go to-morrow?"

"No, dear mother. Here is the kind note;—read it. I am going on a visit there. Meaning only to stay one night here, I brought no clothes, and so I must go back, if only for them."

"Then you will both return here afterwards?"

"I think not, dear. Ernest must go to town and arrange his affairs. I think, after a day or two at Oatlands, we must start at once for London, and as soon as we are settled you must come to us."

"Ah! well, we shall see all about that, the country suits me best, I think, and my quiet, old-fashioned ways. You must both come and see me when you want change."

"I think you had better send the note, Madge, dear; the man has been here some time."

"Yes, I will write it directly."

She wrote a few earnest words of thanks with a promise to come on the following day, and they then sat down to dinner, and went all for a walk after, and came home to the early tea. The cosy talk over the bright fire and the supper—over which meal they seemed merry and more full of talk than

at any other, and then to the early rest—poor Ernest more intensely enjoying this quiet English home life than he could himself have believed possible ; he needed no excitement or amusement; to be with his dear Margaret in any home a free man restored to his good name and position was enough for him. How little a few years back could he have believed in the real enjoyment he should feel in this quiet, monotonous, uneventful mode of life. But it seemed now as though he would be content for it to last for ever. Mrs. Barton was sorry to part with them, but no tears dimmed the good old lady's sight as her daughter drove away this time, for the glad smile which lighted the pale face spoke of the happy heart, and the mother felt she had nothing to sorrow for.

CHAPTER X.

"I WONDER what time they will be here, Lucy?" said Jeanie Deane, on the morning the Bridgenorths were expected. "I am longing to see him, are not you?"

"Yes, I am somewhat curious; I am glad, for her sake, dear thing, he has come home; but I am so sorry to lose her."

"What shall we do? Will mamma have another governess, I wonder?"

"I suppose so, for Carry and May; and what are we to do till we're out."

"Oh! I don't know; I think it would be vastly jolly to have no governess at all; suppose we got a nasty, cross, stiff, tiresome thing, I shall be sure to be saucy, and then there 'll be endless rows."

"Mamma's not likely to engage such a person; but if she did, there is no occasion for you to be saucy that I see."

"No occasion, perhaps, but the depravity of my nature, which will occasionally peep out; there's no occasion for a horse to kick, but they will sometimes when you drive the spur in. Hark! wheels, here they come," and Jeanie jumped on a table standing in the window to inspect the new arrival.

"Jeanie, Jeanie, come down, it's dangerous, and rude, too; mamma would be angry if she saw you. Jeanie, do you hear?"

"Then, fortunately for her temper she won't see me," said Jeanie, jumping down again. "I saw them; he's excessively good-looking, too, I can tell you: do you think we might rush down?"

"I think we might go down, certainly, and I shall," said quiet Lucy, putting away her paint-box, which she had been using.

"Oh! then I shall go;" and throwing down on the table some embroidery she was doing, Jeanie flew down-stairs to the library, into which visitors were always shown. To her surprise, however, Lucy was there before; she had walked quietly down the back stairs, which were close to the school-room door, and she had not had to stop as Jeanie had to join up the braid of her dress, which had

been torn off for a day or two, and which she had continually forgotten to have mended.

"Oh! dear Miss Barton," she exclaimed; "how d'ye do?"

"We must leave off calling her Miss Barton," said Mrs. Deane, smiling.

Jeanie blushed as she answered:

"Yes, I forgot; I beg your pardon."

"Let me introduce you to my husband," said Margaret, "and then you will not forget Mr. Bridgenorth, Miss Jeanie Deane."

Jeanie held her hand out to him, which he shook warmly, and then Mrs. Deane said, "I think luncheon is just going in, take Mrs. Bridgenorth upstairs, Lucy, to take off her things."

"I can find my own way, without troubling Lucy," said Margaret.

"No, but you're company now," Lucy said, laughing; "we must treat you very politely, you've got the company-room, and all."

"May I come too?" said Jeanie.

"Certainly, dear," and the three, their arms interlaced like loving sisters, left the room together.

"My girls will have a great loss in your sweet wife, they are so fond of her."

"Most people love her, I think," he answered.

"Yes, it is impossible to help it when you know her; and she is so clever, I fear I shall never supply her place."

"It is a difficult thing, I have no doubt, to get a person to whom one would like to confide one's children, but I hope you will be successful in getting some one you like. I trust you will. If Margaret can assist you in your search, I am sure she will be happy to do so."

"Yes, I know she will. I shall be in no haste to decide, but make the elder girls look after the little ones for a time."

"I feel quite sorry to pass my own pretty little room," said Margaret, as she and the girls came down the staircase; "but I am much flattered at your dear mother's kindness in giving us such a charming room."

"We must make much of you the little time you have to stay, dear," said Lucy. "How we shall miss you."

"You must come and stay with me when I get a nice house, if mamma will allow you."

"That would be nice."

"And me, too, troublesome me?" asked Jeanie.

"Yes, troublesome you. But where is my sweet May and Carry ?—I have not seen them."

"Go in the library, and I will go and fetch them," said Jeanie. "I dare say they are in the play-room."

"They are being dressed for their dinner, my love," said Mrs. Deane, hearing the last words as they opened the library door. "The bell will ring in a moment. Is Miss Barton—I beg your pardon, Mrs. Bridgenorth—waiting to see her little pet ?"

"Yes, so much." As she spoke the great bell rang, and in a moment little May came flying in.

She stood a moment, then flew into Margaret's arms, with a little cry of joy.

"This is my special darling, Ernest," said his wife. "She seems," she added in a lower voice, "like Eva to me."

Mr. Bridgenorth stooped to kiss her, but she hid her face in Margaret's neck, and put up one little dimpled elbow to guard herself.

"Oh, May, why will you not kiss Mr. Bridgenorth ?" said her mamma.

"He's dot such a rough face."

"Poor little woman !" he said, laughing. "The hair offends her, I doubt not."

"I suppose it is that; but we must come to lunch now, and perhaps they will be more sociable after dinner. I am sorry to say, Mr. Bridgenorth, my husband will not be home at lunch, but he returns to dinner. He was obliged to go out. He begged me to apologise."

"Do not mention it, I beg. Allow me," and offering his arm to Mrs. Deane, they proceeded to the dining-room—Margaret escorted closely by all the children.

The days seemed to pass very quickly and very happily. Mrs. Deane was a charming hostess; she always allowed her guests to do as they liked. Having once told them the hours for meals, she worried them into no other arrangements.

The carriage came round after lunch, and those that liked drove, or they walked, or did what they pleased until after dinner. Margaret Bridgenorth, alone with her husband (for they knew how she would prefer being alone with him, and never proposed to accompany them), used generally to take a walk in the old haunts she had frequented so long with her young charges, and of which she must now take a long farewell; and in each spot she could recount some pleasant, amusing recollections of her young

people to her husband. She expressed great regret that she could not see Francis again, so Mr. Deane was consulted as to the possibility of getting leave for him for one day and night.

He thought it might be managed, and so it was arranged that there should be a general meeting on the night before the Bridgenorths left. Everard, who would be at home, was also to be asked, as he was a great favourite of the *ci-devant* Miss Barton.

The dinner was to be half an hour earlier than usual, so that Carry might also dine with them, and May come down to dessert.

When Jeanie and Lucy entered the drawing-room, they started to see a lady there, seated alone by the fire-light. They knew their mamma had said Everard was to be the only stranger. But this fair delicate-looking person in a rich dress of white silk, with long, rich, brown curls falling upon a neck scarcely less white than her dress; a bunch of scarlet ash-berries fastened in amongst her hair—who could she be? They stood still, both of them, for a second, and then a voice they knew said—

"Well, girls, down first—won't you come near the fire? it's quite cold to-night."

"Miss Barton!" they exclaimed, both together, in voices of astonishment.

"Oh, my hair. It never struck me you would not know me. Does it alter me so much?"

"Why, you dear thing," said Jeanie, springing to her, and nearly demolishing her in a hug; "you looked so lovely we did not know you."

"Civil, Jeanie, I must say," said Lucy, going to the mantelpiece and lighting the candles, with an excusable curiosity, to examine more clearly the pretty graceful figure before her.

"Oh, but she knows what I mean, don't you, dear?"

"You never saw me so smart before, did you, Jeanie? It was to please Ernest. He said, 'dress yourself as you did at your wedding; let down all your hair, and put on your wedding-gown.' Poor dress! I never thought to wear it again."

"He *was* good to make you. Never put your hair up again. Oh, it is lovely!—as beautiful as Amy Stapleton's."

"No, no, Jeanie," said Margaret.

"Yes, it is; and your pretty gown, and your nice, white, plump shoulders. I never saw you in a quite low dress before. Isn't your husband in raptures with you?"

"Jeanie, don't run on so," said Lucy, who had been quietly surveying her former governess—equally delighted with the change in her, but unwilling to express her admiration so openly.

Happiness is certainly a great thing. In the pretty, elegant dress, and with the face lighted up with happiness and content, Margaret certainly did look lovely. Her features were so good that they needed only a brighter expression and the cheek a flush of pleasure to make the face lovely. And so she looked, as she stood there blushing at the open admiration of her enthusiastic pupil.

Little May was still more demonstrative when she arrived, for she assured her she was the "beautiest lady she had ever seen." Francis had come only just in time to dress for dinner, and he therefore had not seen Margaret till he entered the dining-room; and he also hesitated before he shook hands with her, as did Hugh Everard, who whispered to Jeanie—"What has she done to herself? I never thought her pretty before," and Mr. Deane assured his wife he should have objected to her engaging Miss Barton, had she looked as pretty then as now.

Grandmamma had been induced to dine down-

stairs on this festive occasion, which Margaret thought a very great compliment—for Christmas-day was the only day on which the old lady made this great exertion. Of course she returned again to her own room when the ladies rose from table, after drinking very heartily the toast proposed by Mr. Deane—"Many years of health and happiness to Mr. and Mrs. Bridgenorth."

When Margaret went to bed that night, on her dressing-table she found a number of parcels, all done up in white paper and directed to her. And tears of pleasure fell on each as, on opening them, she found them to contain elegant presents from every member of the household.

From grandmamma: a beautiful Bible, magnificently bound in carved wood, with gold clasps; inscribed inside—

"From a loving friend to her whose sorrow she sorrowed with, and whose joy she most heartily rejoices in.

"'Look at the generations of old, and see—Did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded? Or any abide in His fear, and was forsaken?'—Eccles. xi. 10."

From Mr. and Mrs. Deane: a photographic album,

in a morocco case, bound in violet velvet, with her initials in gold on the side, containing portraits of them all.

From the two eldest girls: a handsome carbuncle brooch; from the third youngest, a bracelet composed of links of gold, fastened with an oval clasp of gold, that, opening with a spring, showed one of May's golden curls, tied with small seed-pearls. This little secret had been a source of great delight to May.

From Francis: an edition of Longfellow, beautifully illustrated; and from all the servants, who had begged their mistress to allow them to present to the governess they had all loved some testimony of their respect and affection, a handsome set of vases in Majolica ware.

Margaret called her husband eagerly from his dressing-room, to come and see her presents; and he was as delighted as she was herself at this proof of the esteem and love she had been held in:—light had indeed come out of the darkness to her.

They were to leave the next morning by an early train, and there were many tears on either side when the carriage drew to the door, and "good-by" had to be uttered. She had been down to the kitchen,

The Departure of Mrs. Bridgenorth.

CHAPTER XI.

"GIRLS," said Mrs. Deane, opening the schoolroom door some few days after Margaret's departure, "I'm going out to make a few calls. You and Jeanie had better come too."

"Very well, mamma dear. Where to?"

"Oh, Mrs. Warleigh's, and the Vicar's; and perhaps on Lady Maudesley."

"Must we get ourselves up?"

"Not very extensively; but make yourselves look respectable."

"It is rather fun to be a little gaily dressed to call on Mrs. Warleigh," said Jeanie, as they went to their room to dress. "She stares us up and down so, and looks as though she thought it such a wicked waste of time and money."

"Yes, she's a strange woman, certainly. Is it to-morrow week Francis comes home, Jeanie?"

"Yes, to-morrow week, dear old boy. I think Everard's grown, don't you?"

"Yes, a little."

"He says he's very happy at his tutor's; that he's a capital fellow, and his wife very nice."

"Yes, come; are you ready? I am."

"Oh, Lucy, impossible! I've only got one boot on."

"Because you always stop working to talk. I can work and talk too."

"I can't; but do wait. I'll make haste; but I haven't a notion where my gloves are, I will take another pair."

"Oh, Jeanie, your half-dozen won't last their time."

"I know they won't; they never do."

"You must marry a very rich man, Jeanie."

"Must I? I tell you I shall never marry at all. I shall never find one like papa. Oh, I can hear mamma going down-stairs! Where's my muff? and then I'm ready. Oh, where is it? Good gracious! Here, stuffed down behind this box, my dear little sable muff."

"Whose fault, Jeanie?" asked Lucy.

"Charlotte's. She ought to have put it in the muff-box, of course.

"I always put my own in."

"What's the good of having a maid, and waiting on oneself?"

"You know, Jeanie, mamma said that Charlotte was only to do our hair, and dress us for dinner, not to put our things away, and so encourage us in idleness and untidiness."

"I don't want much encouraging, it comes natural. Coming, mamma dear," she exclaimed, in answer to her mother's call from the bottom of the stairs; and snatching up her muff and a new pair of gloves, Jeanie ran down-stairs after her sister.

Lady Maudesley was at home, and "so delighted to see them. She was sure it was an age since they had met. She really, since the fine weather was gone, did not know what to do with herself; it was so miserably cold she could not go out, and the days were so long and horrible. Would Mrs. Deane let the dear girls come and spend a long day with her?"

This placed Mrs. Deane rather in a difficulty, for it was the last thing she wished her "dear girls" to do; so she said she could not quite promise, as now she had no governess, they had charge of the younger ones, but she would see.

"Oh yes; by the bye, your governess is gone. Some very romantic history there was about her having married some man, and then he turned out a convict—fancy!"

"Not exactly," said Mrs. Deane, smiling.

"Well, something of that sort, was it not? However, she's gone; and I suppose the girls are delighted. I used to be when my governesses went. I'd heaps; but they were always leaving, because they couldn't manage me,—fancy! little me!"

Mrs. Deane thought she could well fancy it, but she did not say so; and soon rising to go, on the plea of having so many calls to make, Mrs. Deane and her girls left this foolish little woman to amuse herself as she best could.

"What an existence to pass!" said Mrs. Deane, when they got out into the road. "So utterly purposeless. She seems no use to herself or others, but doubtless she has her end in life. As I told you, Jeanie, once, it may be that she is meant as a beacon to preserve others from being equally silly."

"I wonder what she does all day?" said Lucy.

"Nothing, positively nothing, but eat and drink, dress herself, and pay and receive calls. I have

heard her say she hates reading and working. If she lives to be as old, her life will be somewhat different to grandmamma's."

"Indeed, yes," said Jeanie; "even I feel wiser and better after a talk with grandmamma."

"Why say 'even I,' Jeanie dear? I fear you are inclined to be somewhat proud of your silly ways, instead of ashamed of them, you make allusion to them so often, and yet in no penitent mood."

"Oh, mother darling! proud, indeed, I'm not, but only inclined to be a little perverse, and make myself out worse than I am, when Lucy is so dreadfully good and precise."

"I wish you were more like Lucy, my child. Your good humour and fun make your faults seem light and excusable now; but if you do not resolutely set to work to cure them, your married home, if you ever have one, will be a perpetual punishment to you. Want of order and regularity in the mistress of a household is always copied by the servants, and disorder and discomfort soon rupture domestic happiness; and the husband who finds a comfortless house at home, will seek a more agreeable one abroad. But stay, we are passing the vicarage gate. I am going to call here."

Mr. Walker was at home, and his eldest daughter, who kept his house, for he was a widower. After some little ordinary talk, he said—

"You have lost your governess, I hear. Are you seeking another?"

"Yes, I am; do you know of one?"

"Well, it depends greatly on the sort of person you want. I have had a letter from an old friend of mine I had lost sight of for some years, saying she is left a widow, with a very small pension, and two daughters to support, and she wishes to know if I can find a situation for one of them."

"What I require most is a young lady—*really* a lady—who is capable of teaching my two youngest, and being a companion to the two others—to enter into their amusements and employments, and yet have sufficient command to insist on the masters' work being done."

"I can answer for the 'lady' part of the question, if the girls are anything like their mother; but of their powers of teaching I know nothing. I think it would be a great charity to take one."

"Can I see her?" said Mrs. Deane; "because, for the present, till my two girls are out, I really require more a good, intelligent companion for them

than anything else, and if it would really be a kind thing to do, she might come to us for a few months at first."

"I will write for all particulars, and let you know," said Mr. Walker.

"Thank you very much. One object of my visit to-day, Mr. Walker, was to offer mine and the girls' services for decorating the Church, if we can be made useful."

"That you can. I shall want hands dreadfully, and I have a grateful remembrance of your usefulness and your taste last Christmas."

"Well, we are at your service when you want us."

"Thank you. I have been thinking of having a decoration feast; that is to say, giving up the large school-room to the use of the workers, and then having them all to supper, and a little music after—the last evening, I mean."

"I think that would be capital."

"Very well, then; we shall begin on the 20th to work in the school, but the feast is to be on the 24th—Christmas-eve."

The girls liked the idea of this very much, and talked of it all the way to Mrs. Warleigh's, but Mrs. Deane's head was full of the new governess, and

whether her place would suit, so that she did not join much in their animated conversation; but during their visit to Mrs. Warleigh the subject was there spoken of, and Mrs. Deane inquired if her daughters were going to assist.

"Oh dear me," she said, "I hate such nonsense; it's only an excuse for flirting with the curates. I don't allow my girls to do anything of the kind; if the Church is to be trimmed up, let the churchwardens and clerk do it; much fitter work for them than for a parcel of giggling girls."

"I think it is women's especial work now, Mrs. Warleigh; there is so little they can do for the Church, that they ought to lose no opportunity of doing that little; to help with their taste and nimble fingers in beautifying God's temple, is such a nice thing for them to do."

"I don't think it does beautify it, covering up these fine stone pillars and arches with a lot of green."

"You think the work of man finer than the work of God, then? Do you admire a pillar more than a tree?"

"I don't know that I don't."

"You would like a colonnade of stone arches rather better than an avenue of trees?"

"Yes, I think it would be finer."

"Oh! then we must, as usual, agree to differ, and I will, as a great wit once remarked on a similar occasion, when a young lady told him she could see no beauty in a tree, 'retire under melancholy *boughs*,' and wish you good morning."

"Is Annabella quite well?" Lucy ventured to ask as they rose to go.

"Yes, she's well, I believe, but I have a great deal of trouble with her, a great deal indeed; so different to the others, they are no trouble at all; however, I've always heard there must be one black sheep in every flock."

"I trust that is not decidedly necessary," said Mrs. Deane, laughing.

"I don't know about necessary, but you always see it; according to my girls' account you've got one."

"Have I, which one's that?"

"Oh, there's no need to mention names, it's me, mamma dear, I daresay," said Jeanie, smiling.

"Well, we won't inquire too seriously, Jeanie, but try and find out, and see if we can't wash the blackamoor white. Good-by, Mrs. Warleigh."

"Good-by, Mrs. Deane; if you like to go through the garden you'll find Annabella there, girls."

"No, thank you, not to-day, for we are rather in haste," and Mrs. Deane hurried out, and when the hall door was shut behind her, she said, "I declare, I think I must cut that woman, she tries my temper beyond description: where shall we go, girls, to get amiable again?"

"To Granny White," said both the girls.

"So we will, she is enough to make anyone good-tempered."

Quickly walking over the crisp, frosty ground, the little party soon arrived at a small thatched cottage, and as Mrs. Deane knocked at the door, she said at the same time, "it's me, granny; may I come in?"

"God bless you, yes, sure," answered a voice within, and they entered the cleanly little dwelling, where, seated in a nice arm-chair, was the brightest and cleanest-looking old woman imaginable. Very small, of almost fairy-like proportions, she might have passed for a child, but for the wrinkled face, and silvery white hair, which told of the snows of many a winter; but what would still more strike the beholder of this miniature woman, was the extraordinary cheerfulness which beamed in her face, and in her voice, and seemed positively to light her little dwelling.

"Come in, come in, do: I be glad to see you all, ladies, though you know I can't get up to make you a curtsey, though I would if I could, and that you know, don't you."

"That we do, granny," they said, shaking hands cordially with her.

"Now, please to set you down, there's dears, it's so pleasant to see you."

"And how is your foot to-day?" asked Mrs. Deane.

"Much as common, thank you, ma'am, but I've no call to say much about it, it only troubles me when I walk and stand, and so I mustn't walk and stand, that's all, and thank God I've no occasion to; my little maid does all my place up for me before she goes to school, and comes to set my dinner when she comes home, likewise my tea in the afternoon, and washes up and clears away; so here I sits all day, just like a real borned lady, and I look just like one, don't I?" she said, laughing heartily.

"If all ladies looked as happy, granny, the world would be a very merry one, I think."

"Ah! poor dears, they've got a lot to trouble them, ladies has, and a deal to think of. I've nothing

to do nor trouble about, but to sit in this comfortable chair and have everything brought me. I haven't got a want nor trouble in the wide world."

"Your poor foot?" suggested Jeanie.

"Well, dearie, I can't make a trouble of that, for, as I say, it don't hurt me if I don't move, and I've no reason to move: what should an old body of eighty-two want gadding about? All I miss is the Church; and do you know our good parson—God bless him—is going to let me have a wheel chair to take me to Church, and I'm to have a seat just inside the Church door, so as I shan't have to walk at all; it's the only thing I've had to wish for, and now I've got that, why I think there never was any one so fortunate; I seem to have everything I want."

"Your daughter lives next door to you now, doesn't she?" said Mrs. Deane.

"Yes, see that now! What a blessing that is; little Fanny—that's her biggest gal—comes and settles me up, like I told you, in a 'tween school times. Dear me, when I looks round and thinks of my neighbours, as I do many times, and see what some of them is suffering, I do say from the bottom of my heart, 'bless the Lord, oh my soul; and forget not all his benefits.'"

"And I say, Mrs. White, that it does my heart good to come and see you; and I only hope and pray I may be able, through my life, to follow the example you set me, of seeing a blessing in every trial, a light in every cloud."

"Well, you see, ma'am, I ain't much of a scholard; I can read, praise the Lord, a little, but not much; but I'm like the Welshman's parrot, a rare one to think," and she laughed again that cheery laugh which sounded fresh from her heart. "And when I'm thinking, I remember that God said, 'I will set my bow in the cloud.' He did not say sometimes, yet we only see it sometimes. Well, then, I think as this, that though we can't see it, it's there; because He said He would set it there. And when I look up and see the sky covered with clouds, I say, never mind, His beautiful bow *is* there, to tell us of His presence and our safety: so what signifies the clouds?—the bow, the bright bow, full of such pretty colours, is 'set' there: the clouds are only visitors, which bring the blessed promise of His love and care."

Mrs. Deane's eyes were full of tears. She felt she could have knelt before that poor, humble old woman whose faith was so great.

"We will all try to think of your words, granny, and remember the radiant bow when our sorrows look very dark about us."

"Do, my dears, do. People now sometimes trouble their heads with what's going to happen—such and such shocking things a coming on us. Well, I say, never mind; thinking and fretting over it won't hinder it—'sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.' What we dread seldom comes to pass, and 'he will not be afraid of evil tidings, whose heart is fixed upon the Lord.' Ladies, this has kept me a happy, cheerful, healthy woman to the age of eighty-two years; and may God be blessed for His mercy to me. Why, bless you, sometimes people say, 'ain't you very dull and lonely?' Not I. I don't know what dull means. I've sat at this window and laughed till the tears have run down my cheeks, at some silly joke I can recollect when I was young; or at the kitten playing with its tail; or the ducks and geese giving themselves such airs yonder in Farmer Stoke's yard. That farm's like a picture-book to me; it does just amuse me. There's a great big cock there; and it's 'who but he' in the yard, I can tell you. See him strut about as if all the world was his, and he'd nothing to pay

for it. There's a many human beings not so much unlike him, I think. Then the pigs, all looking out for themselves, and squabbling for the best bit in the wash. They make me laugh, as I think as we're all on us doing the same, and squabbling for the best bits. It does pass my time away, watching the things till I'm quite struck when my little maid comes in and says she's come to get tea."

"A cheerful, contented spirit finds amusement out of a very little, granny, I have always found."

"I believe so; and somehow a little always has amused me. My poor dear man used to say, 'Bless me, Sally, whatever are you chuckelling at there? I can't see no fun. You'd laugh if I held my finger up.' And so I should, I lay. He was oncommon serious, my man. I used ofttimes to wonder how he ever took up with such as me. I was like young Miss there, when I was young—pretty full of mischief and fun; but you know I never meant no harm, and never hurt no one, only full of my jokes; and looking back at them now, many a time makes me laugh."

"We must come some evening, and have a cup of tea with you, if you will let us, granny, and hear some of your old tales," said Lucy.

"So you shall my dear, so you shall; but you don't mean it though, do you really?"

"Yes, indeed, I do."

"I should like it of all things," said Jeanie.

"I should be oncommon proud to see you, you may depend on it; and I've got some rale chany tea-things too."

"We'll have them out that day, granny."

"They shall come, but we must go now; we've paid you quite a visitation; and here, I declare, comes your little maid," said Mrs. Deane, as the door opened and a neat, brown-eyed little girl, about twelve, entered.

She dropped a curtsey to the ladies, and setting down a nice-looking loaf on the table, went and stood behind her grandmother's chair.

"Get granny's tea, Fanny; we are going. God bless your good soul! you've done me a great deal of good."

"And so you have me, ma'am, and that's what God means we should do, I believe, and may His blessing rest on us all;" and taking the hands of each of her visitors, she kissed them respectfully; and they could hear her merry voice, and hearty laugh, chattering to her little grandchild as they walked down the garden path.

CHAPTER XII.

FRANCIS was home for the holidays, and the weather was sharp and cold enough, to his great delight, for him to skate. There was a pretty straight stream about half a mile from the house, and there he went with the girls for a long morning of this excellent exercise. He had asked permission for Everard to spend his holidays with him, but old Mr. Everard said he really could not spare him all the holidays, but the last fortnight he would be happy to let him come. Jeanie said she was very glad; for one thing, they should see a little more of Francis than if he had had his friend with him, as then all his time would have been given to him.

"Are not you glad for that reason, Lucy?" said Jeanie.

"I don't know. I believe I have not thought much about it."

"Well, I have given it my gravest consideration,

and have come to that conclusion. Hark! there's mamma calling. Coming, dear;" and Jeanie ran out of the school-room to her mother.

"I wanted to tell you girls that you must manage at luncheon without me. I have had a note from the Vicar, asking me to lunch there, to see the young lady about whom he spoke to me. She is come to stay a day or two with him."

"Very well, mamma dear. Then Lucy is to take your place?"

"Yes, and keep order," said Mrs. Deane, laughing.

Arrived at the rectory, Mrs. Deane was shown into Mr. Walker's study, in which poor little Carry had sat and trembled, and Mr. Walker soon joined her.

"I thought, Mrs. Deane, it would be better," he said, "for you to see my young friend unfettered by the idea that she was to be your governess, so I have said nothing to her, and you can judge for yourself as to her suitability. Shall we come into the drawing-room? I had you shown in here, because I could just explain my reasons for troubling you to come to lunch."

"Thank you very much. I think it is a very good plan."

Poor Miss Walker! This invitation to lunch was a very painful thing to her. Since Mrs. Walker's death, the Vicar had kept no company, nor accepted invitations, so that his daughter really knew nothing of society. She was also fully occupied in the care of her young brothers and sisters, whom she had been fetched from a boarding-school to look after, having received no instruction in the management of a home; indeed, knowing nothing but the spattering of French, Italian, and music which had been instilled into her in that seminary for young ladies. The vicarage, therefore, though in beautiful order outside—for Mr. Walker thoroughly understood gardening and all out-door arrangements—gave evidence of a want of home comfort and that cheerfulness and order which speak of a good "head" to the house.

To have a strange young lady staying with her was in itself a great trial to poor Helen Walker, and then to have Mrs. Deane—the grand Mrs. Deane, whose house was always cited as the most elegant in the parish, and her table the best ordered—to have her to luncheon was dreadful. What should she order, and had not the children better dine upstairs? Bobby would be sure to mess the cloth, and

Julia to mess her pinafore, and Annie to cry for everything: but Mr. Walker thought not. Mrs. Deane was asked on a matter of business, not as an entertainment; and the luncheon, she must know, would be the children's dinner. It was better not to make any pretension, but to go on as usual. Fortunately they possessed a very excellent plain cook, and so the fried soles and the leg of mutton were well done, and the apple-pie was all that could be wished, though the cook was sadly annoyed herself that Miss Walker had not told her before that she was going to have Mrs. Deane to lunch, and she would have seen about having something better.

However, it was got through very fairly; Mrs. Deane, not being a nervous or fidgetty person, standing very well Bobby twice choking himself, and Julia emptying the best part of her dinner on to her pinafore, more particularly as she was engaged in watching the young lady whom she had come on purpose to see.

She was a tall, fine girl, much taller than her own daughters, and rather good looking, with a good natural expression, but not great intelligence, in the face. She seemed very kind to the children, and very cheerful, which was a very desirable quality.

After luncheon, Mrs. Deane took an opportunity of talking to her alone, and found that she expressed herself very fond of children, and very fond of teaching, and that she should much like a situation as governess. It seemed evident from her conversation she had been well and sensibly brought up; but considering the grave importance of the case, Mrs. Deane did not like to decide hastily, and requesting to be allowed to say a few words to Mr. Walker before she left, she told him that she should much like his young friend to come and spend a day at Oatlands. She could then see if the girls liked Miss Beatson, and determine finally as to taking her. Mr. Walker agreed at once to this proposal; so on taking leave Mrs. Deane named a day for her visit, and of course said she should be pleased if Miss Walker would accompany them, but blushing to the roots of her hair, Helen stammered an apology, and said she could not leave the children.

Of course Lucy and Jeanie were most anxious to see the new governess, and glad to think they were to see her before the matter was finally settled. She came just before lunch, and her pleasant, unembarrassed manner made a very favourable impression at once on the girls. Though she evidently did not

know as much as Miss Barton, she had a great deal of general information and knowledge of the world, which Miss Barton had not; and in short, by the time the respectable old gardener from the vicarage came to fetch Miss Beatson home, it was agreed that she would suit admirably, though a great contrast to their former gentle little innocent governess.

"I think she's jolly," said Jeanie to Lucy, when they went up to bed. Jeanie's room opened into Lucy's, so that they could have a chat as they undressed. "Don't you think you shall like her?"

"I shall try to do so, for dear mamma would be vexed if I did not, and she has been so anxious about it."

"Yes, but still one can't like people just to please some one else. When does she come, do you know?"

"Oh, not till we begin school again, of course."

"She looks too jolly to teach. She seemed delighted with May. She says she's the prettiest child she ever saw in her life."

"Does she? she is a pretty darling, bless her! But good night, Jeanie dear, I'm sleepy, and I want to get up early to-morrow, to finish grandmamma's Afghan for Christmas-day."

"All right. Good night."

The day came for the wreaths to be commenced for the church, and soon after breakfast Carry, Jeanie, and Lucy started for the school, Mrs. Deane promising to come after lunch. Miss Beatson, Miss Walker, and two or three school-girls, were there before them. The vicar himself did not come until the afternoon, and then he told Mrs. Deane that he had made an engagement with Mrs. Beatson to keep her daughter until she went to her new situation. He said Mrs. Beatson was most pleased to hear she was going to such a nice home, —so near her old friend.

"You are getting on famously, young ladies," he said, turning to the girls, when he had finished his conversation with Mrs. Deane. "Who's going to undertake the wreaths for the font?"

"Miss Deane," said the other girls. "She is so much the cleverest."

Lucy, blushing at the compliment, said—

"Indeed, I should be almost afraid to undertake it, but I will try if Mr. Walker wishes me."

"I wish some one to undertake it, but I should not think of dictating who should."

"Is not Mr. Griffiths coming to assist?" asked Mrs. Deane.

"My curate? Oh, yes. He will be here presently. He is much interested in the matter. Talk of the sun you see his rays—here he comes."

A nice-looking, gentlemanly, and excessively clerical man entered the school, with a large basket in his hand.

"Well, Mr. Griffiths," said the vicar, "what have you got there?"

"Some material. I have been to the wood to get moss—I thought it would be useful,—and as much lauristinus as I could spare out of my tiny garden."

"Thank you very much; I like the idea of a contribution from every garden. We were just talking of the wreath for the font," said Mr. Walker.

"Yes, that must be beautiful. Who is going to undertake it?"

"Miss Deane, I think."

"Then, will not this moss be useful for the steps of the font, with real flowers laid in amongst it, Miss Deane?"

"Yes, very nice. I was thinking of white chrysanthemums mixed with box for the edge of the font."

"Yes, that will be lovely. Can you get them?"

"We have quantities in our greenhouse. I cannot think of anything which would be prettier than the steps nicely covered with the moss, with crimson and white flowers going up in stripes alternately. Would not that be effective?"

"Yes, indeed; but that must be done the last day, and even then I fear they would fade," said Mr. Griffiths.

"Oh, but I have an idea, if the vicar will allow me to carry it out, which is, to have some tins made long and narrow, which we can fill with wet sand, and stick the flowers in."

"Oh, yes, that is a capital idea."

"What are you two concerting?" said the vicar, coming up to them.

Mr. Griffiths told him, and he consented at once that the order should be given for the tins.

Lucy and the curate continued talking for some time, and then Miss Beatson came up and asked what she was to do next, as she had finished her wreath, for they seemed to have adopted Lucy as their head.

"You must begin another, please," said Lucy. "There are so many to make. The one for the chancel-arch is a very long one."

As she finished speaking, Mr. Griffiths gave Miss Beatson a sudden scrutinising glance, which she herself did not seem to remark.

They worked on till dusk, when the vicar had tea and coffee sent in, after which they all returned home, to commence again on the following day.

Miss Beatson and Miss Walker had made some texts in leaves and berries for the walls of the Church, and they were brought down for exhibition the next morning. Every one voted they were excellent, and would have a beautiful effect. They were all busy working when the school-door opened and a head peeped in.

"May I help," said a voice, which Jeanie at once recognised as Hugh Everard's.

"By all means," said Jeanie. "Come in and make yourself useful." And so he was soon as busy as the rest, cutting boughs and branches, and declaring that they never would have done the least good but for him.

"Lucy," said Jeanie, when they were going to bed on that same day, "did you notice the odd way in which Mr. Griffiths looked at Miss Beatson?"

"No, I didn't."

"La, Lucy, you never see anything."

"And you, dear, see more than any one else."

"No, but really he did quite start when he saw her."

"Jeanie, what nonsense. Why, she's been staying at the rectory for a week. He must have seen her often and often."

"I beg your pardon, he only came home yesterday; he has been for a holiday; and he never saw Miss Beatson until yesterday morning—here, at least."

"I believe, Jeanie, you think we cannot have a governess without a romance."

"No, I don't, but I thought it was strange to see him look at her as he did."

"All fancy, dear, depend on it."

However, Jeanie was not to be so easily turned from her opinion, and determined to watch them narrowly.

Christmas-eve came, with real Christmas weather too: heavy snow on the ground, and a bright sun over head; all had worked well and heartily, and it was unanimously agreed the church would be prettier than ever; the afternoon was devoted to putting up the decorations—the pulpit and reading-desk wreaths had been made by Miss Beatson, and

great praise was accorded to them. Until dusk all hands were occupied in this employment, and they then adjourned to the vicarage to spend the evening. With Miss Beatson's able assistance, Helen had got on so well, that having there about twelve or fourteen people to supper was not nearly so distressing as Mrs. Deane's visit to luncheon, and the affair really passed off remarkably well. Jeanie's chief amusement consisted in watching Mr. Griffiths and Miss Beatson, but except that he once addressed her in a low tone, she found no more materials for her romance.

Christmas morning was still bright and frosty, the frozen snow hanging in lumps on bough and leaf, and eaves of houses and barns, lying on the thatch thick and smooth like the icing on wedding cakes; here and there, on such smooth surfaces, were little marks made by the feet of birds, and on the unswept paths, were lines of little holes marking the road taken by Jowler, the old dog, who was allowed the privilege of his old age and long service to wander about as he liked.

The girls were delighted on awaking to find the frost had still remained, for papa had been prophesying a thaw, and they were looking forward to a

delicious morning of skating when Everard arrived. Francis had constructed a sledge and a collar with bells for his pony, who was to draw it, so that the continuance of the frost was a great fact. Everard was to come the day after Boxing-day—Thursday—and Friday was fixed for the trial of the sledge. May] dined with them on Christmas-day; they dined at four on purpose; and after dinner were games at post, goose, Spanish merchant, and a grand finale of snapdragon in the hall. An old servant of the family living in the village always came to dine with the servants and keep house in the evening, while the whole of the establishment went together to the evening service, which the early dinner enabled them to do, and which they greatly enjoyed.

"Well, Charlotte," said Jeanie to the maid, when she was undressing, "what did you think of the Church?"

"Oh! it was beautiful, miss."

"Were there many people there?"

"Yes, a great many, the vicarage pew was quite full.

"And they were there morning and afternoon too! how very good. It must be a dull Christmas-day for the young ones, though."

"Yes, miss; I should think it was rather."

"Was Miss Beatson there?"

"The young lady that spent the day here, miss?"

"Yes."

"Oh, yes, she was there. She's such a pretty young lady!"

"Do you think so? She's good-natured-looking."

"I think she'll make Miss Walker rather uncomfortable, if she stays there much longer, miss."

"Why, Charlotte?"

"Mr. Griffiths, miss. The housemaid told me the other day that Miss Helen and Mr. Griffiths, she thought, were engaged; but since Miss Beatson's been there, it's been quite different."

"Jeanie, Jeanie," said Lucy, through the door, "come here a moment."

"Yes, I'm coming. What is it?"

"Why, mamma would be so vexed to hear you talking like that to Charlotte, and encouraging her in gossiping about the neighbours."

"Well, she's not saying any harm, only what I told you all along, that Mr. Griffiths has taken a fancy to Miss Beatson."

"I should not encourage her to talk about it, indeed. Call out good-night to her from my room,

and tell her she can go to bed; that will stop it."

"Such nonsense! I wanted to hear about Mr. Griffiths," said Jeanie, rather sulkily.

"I wonder you can condescend to listen, Jeanie. I can't think what has come to you about Miss Beatson. As I said before, you seem determined to have a governess with a romance."

"Shall I wait, Miss Jeanie?" said Charlotte, coming to the door.

"No," answered Lucy, quickly. "Miss Jeanie is going to stay with me a little; so good-night, Charlotte."

"Good-night, young ladies."

And away went Charlotte, satisfied that she had told Miss Jeanie some news which she was imparting to her sister.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE long-looked-for Thursday of Everard's arrival came at last. Francis went over to lunch with him, and brought him back to Oatlands. Little May was in ecstasies; her doll was dressed in its best, her doll's house adorned with flags, and she besought Hannah to put her on one of her own "beautiest" frocks. She could settle to nothing until he arrived. With her doll cuddled up to her little face, she stood on a stool at the nursery window, watching anxiously for him. Years after,

> "When other hearts and other lips
> Their tales of love *did* tell,"

May would say that never was any after-feeling like this adoration of her childhood,—this pure, devoted, unquestioning love she felt for her childish idol, before experience taught her that perfection did not exist upon earth, before she woke from the dream

that made her imagine it did exist in at least one human being. She waited till the pony-chaise drew up to the door, and then she knew he was in the house, and was satisfied. She felt certain he would not be long before he came to see her. So she went quietly away from the window, and returned to her toys, until the welcome sound of his footstep on the stairs brought her with one bound to the door to admit him.

He stayed some time talking to her and admiring her doll, and then produced a small parcel from his pocket, which made the big eyes open wider.

"Oh! what is it?"

"Open it and see. But it's not for you, it's for dolly; though I dare say she'll let you look at it."

A cry of delight rewarded the giver as, on opening the paper, May saw a miniature writing-desk, with everything complete for writing,—tiny note-paper and envelopes, tiny sticks of sealing-wax, a pen, pencil, seal, and ink-bottle to match. With fresh cries of joy, May examined each little article, and then flung her arms round Hugh's neck. She laid her head on his shoulder, and said,

"I wish 'oo would not dive me 'ees things."

"Why not, little woman?"

'Because I 'f'aid you will think I only love 'oo for them."

"Oh no, May, I'm much too conceited for that. I believe you love me for myself."

"And so I do."

"And I think it so kind of you, little May, that I bring you these things to show my gratitude, not to win the love I have already got, do you see?"

"Hugh! Hugh! where are you, old fellow?"

"I'm coming, Francis." And hastily kissing the little creature, he put her down, and ran downstairs to join his friend.

"Ah, Jeanie," said her father that evening, as she wished him good-night, "I was right. It's much milder: there'll be a thaw before morning, you see now."

"If there is, papa, I don't know what I'll do to you."

"Ha, ha! Well, you'll see."

Alas! Mr. Deane was too good a judge. When they looked out next morning, all the white, beautiful, frozen snow was gone, and nothing remained but a sloppy mess, with here and there in the shade a white lump, which showed that there had been snow —nothing more. It was a dreadful disappointment

to the whole party, and they did not know, of course, what to do with themselves instead.

"I vote we go to the river, and look at it," said Jeanie, "anyhow."

"It will be frightful walking," Everard suggested.

"Yes, I know; but I don't mind. I shall loop up my dress and put on my goloshes, and then I'll walk through the river, if you like."

"Bravo, Jeanie!" said Francis. "Who else is as plucky?"

"I am," said Carry.

"And you, Lucy?" said Francis. "You won't go and get yourself in a mess, will you?"

"Yes, I don't mind, if the others go, and mamma has no objection."

"I have not the least objection, darling. I only trust that there will be no trying of the ice."

"That you may rest quite happy about, Mrs. Deane," said Everard. "The most insane skater would not dream of it, it's such a decided thaw. I should think there is no ice left bigger than a five-shilling piece. I don't believe it would have been safe yesterday; it was going all day."

"Very well. All start, then, and be home to lunch," said Mrs. Deane.

And so the little party set out. Poor little May, who was to have gone if the skating had taken place, was rather inconsolable at being left behind; but her feelings were somewhat tranquillised by Everard suggesting that dolly should write some letters in her new writing-case, to Eleanor Warleigh's dolly; and he would see it went to the "real" post.

Arrived at the part of the river which was to have been the scene of their exploits with the sledge, they found, as Everard had predicted, very little ice left; a few largish blocks were floating about—nothing more.

A few little ragged boys were standing in a group near the edge of the water as the party came up, and seemed holding a very animated discussion.

"I lay," said one, "I'd stand on that bit o' ice there; that 'ud bear, I know."

"I know it wouldn't; why, it's quite loose, you can see. Let's try and catch a bit as it floats by."

"I'll go in and get a bit," said the venturesome little gentleman who had just spoken.

"Here, let me have off my shoes and stockings, and I'll get that there large 'un out there."

"You'd better leave that job alone, young 'un," called Everard; but the boy only looked at him,

and continued pulling off his shoes and stockings. Everard took no more notice, but walked further on with his party, chatting, joking, and laughing as such a party would be likely to do.

Suddenly loud cries and screams startled them; and looking back, Lucy, with an exclamation of horror, said:—

"The boy's in the water." His little companions were screaming and running towards them for help, except one little tiny fellow, the drowning boy's brother, who was stretching his arms towards him, and calling on him piteously to "come back."

It was the work of a moment, before the rest of the little party had time to think, Everard had run back, thrown off his coat, and was swimming after the little chap, as well as the blocks of ice would let him. He had risen twice. Once more the little head came to the surface, and, striking out vigorously, Everard seized him and bore him safe to shore.

Breathlessly had all watched him.

Lucy, with lips and cheeks perfectly colourless, had stood with her hands tightly clasped, and her eyes fixed on the scene, motionless as a statue; but Jeanie had been like a wild girl, calling on him

vehemently to come back, telling Francis he was wicked to let him go; and when, breathless and exhausted, he had borne his burden on shore and flung himself down, she then knelt beside him, and seizing his chilled hands, covered them with kisses.

Poor little Carry had only stood still and cried for sympathy with all, and because she could not help it. Francis was the most useful of the party. He had run off, the moment he had seen that the shore was gained, to a little cottage he could see amongst the trees, and which he deemed probable was the home of the little boy; and in an incredible short space of time, was seen returning, followed by a woman carrying two blankets. His conjecture was right—it was the boy's mother—and she soon had him in her arms, wrapped in one blanket, whilst Francis was persuading Everard to wrap the other round himself until he got to the cottage; but he would not hear of it. He said he was all right now he had got his breath, and he would run quickly to the cottage, which would be much better for him, and get his clothes dried there.

Of course the girls followed him, and Francis ran off to the nearest public-house for some brandy. Not very first-rate stuff did he procure, but he

insisted on giving some, in very hot water, to Everard, and the boy, whom his mother had properly put to bed; and soon Everard declared he was getting quite warm and comfortable, and should soon be "as right as a trivet."

"I think Lucy wants a little brandy, Francis? We have frightened her to death nearly."

"Oh, no; I am all right now," answered Lucy, forcing her white lips into a smile; "and I think we girls had better walk on home, leaving Francis to come with you, or mamma will be uneasy."

"Well thought of, Lucy dear," said Francis; "that's just like you—the dear mother will be sure to fidget if we're late."

"Yes, come, Jeanie, we will go. Everard's clothes will take so long to dry, and he couldn't well walk home in his present garments."

The woman had lent him a smock-frock of her husband's, which reached to the ground, and seated him in an arm-chair close to the fire, with a blanket wrapped round his legs, all the time reiterating thanks and blessings, saying she could never do enough for him.

Jeanie made no answer; but, taking Carry's hand, followed Lucy from the cottage. She was as quiet

now as she had been excited before, and only answered Lucy in monosyllables all the way home; and when they reached the house, she went straight to her own room, and excused herself from luncheon on the plea that the excitement had given her a violent headache. At dinner she also pleaded the same excuse, and when Lucy went up in the evening, to her surprise Jeanie was crying.

"Why, Jeanie darling, is it so bad as that?"

"Oh, Lucy, it is not the pain, it does ache; but it isn't that—I'm so miserable."

"Why, dear; at what?"

"About to-day."

"About to-day? How do you mean? Everard's all right now; are you anxious about him? He doesn't seem in the least the worse."

"No; I mean about my foolish behaviour. I never can speak or look at Everard again. I can't come down any more whilst Everard is here."

"Oh, nonsense, Jeanie dear! In moments of excitement no one takes notice of what any one does."

"Yes, dear; but you were just as frightened, and you were so quiet and good. Oh! you don't know how ashamed I feel."

"I assure you, the best thing to do is to take no notice whatever of the matter, and come down to-morrow morning as usual. Your having a headache after such a fright is quite natural, and Everard himself said he was afraid the fright had made you ill. He is far too much of a gentleman to take advantage of anything you did at such a moment."

"Dear Lucy, I feel better for talking to you; and you *really* think I need not worry myself any more?"

"I *really* think so. Go to bed, now, your poor head and hands are so hot, and get to sleep if you can. Mamma will come up the last thing, she says, and, if you are not asleep, bring you a sedative. God bless you, Jeanie! go to sleep;" and kissing her sister affectionately, Lucy left her.

When Mrs. Deane crept softly in an hour or two afterwards, Jeanie was sleeping calmly.

The next morning, taking Lucy's advice, Jeanie appeared at breakfast, and though she could not help the flush of crimson which mounted to her temples, and even covered her throat, she gave no other evidence of embarrassment. Everard appeared the same as ever; but Jeanie fancied there was a

softened, kinder tone in his manner of addressing her, which she thought he adopted to show he was not, as she termed it, disgusted with her forwardness; but she did not mention this to any one, and when she and Lucy spoke again about it afterwards, she said,—

"I know it was ridiculous of me to kiss his hands in that frantic way, but I could have kissed his dear face, and head, and feet even, for being so good and brave. I wonder I didn't. Oh! how I wish I could be quiet and sensible like you, Lucy dear, and not do such foolish things as I do, and then be so awfully sorry after."

"Yes," said Lucy, smiling; "and good and brave as you thought it, you know you called him to come back and leave the little boy, and said Francis was wicked to let him go."

"I know I did: don't remind me of my ridiculous conduct. I am heartily and thoroughly ashamed of myself; and if knowing one's fault and sorrowing for it, is, as I've been told, half way towards mending it, I'm on the high road towards a 'perfect cure.'"

Lucy laughed as she answered,—

"What a funny girl you are, Jeanie, to be sure. You know, dear, there's a great deal in nature. You

never could, I believe, be quiet like me, any more than I could be excitable like you; but still, we can all, by trying, command ourselves to a certain extent, I am sure."

"Well, practice might make perfect; and perhaps, if something dreadful happened every day for six weeks, I might possibly get used to it, and take it quietly."

"I think the remedy would be worse than the disease, Jeanie."

"Well, perhaps it might. What's going to be done to-day, do you know?"

"The boys are going down to Hurleston after some snipe, I think, and there's a dinner party to-night, you know. I've got my hands full with the flowers for the drawing-room and dinner-table."

"Oh! very well; I'll come and help you to cut them. I can't arrange them, for I haven't the least idea how."

"I shall be glad of help, dear; but I do not think we must cut them without Phillips. There are no garden flowers left but chrysanthemums and laurustinus, and the green-house flowers papa allows no one but Phillips to cut."

"All right. Then I'll hold the basket, and fill the vases with water, or do anything my abilities are equal to."

And so together the girls went to the garden and green-house, and came in laden with flowers, which, with the greatest taste, Lucy arranged.

While they were thus busily occupied, Mrs. Deane came in with a note in her hand.

"I've just had this note, girls," she said; "and I heartily wish I was Mrs. Warleigh for five minutes, that I might have the courage to say 'No' to what I object to say 'Yes' to."

"What is it, mamma dear?" they asked.

"Why, a note from Lady Maudesley, asking you two to spend the day there to-morrow."

"Oh, mamma dear, how dreadful!"

"It is, indeed. I see no way out of it without positive rudeness; so go you must."

"I suppose we could not make Everard an excuse?"

"Oh no; he is your brother's friend,—a boy is no excuse for you. No, I suppose you must go. You can't think of any engagement?"

"Unhappily no, mamma."

"Then I will say you will be there immediately

Pretty to look at.

after lunch; that I cannot spare you before; that will shorten the time a little."

"Yes, so it will; but it's dreadful."

Mrs. Deane went to answer the note, and the girls complained of their hard fate as they finished their flowers.

But there was no help for it, as Lucy said, so they must manage to put up with it with a good grace.

The day was fine and bright, luckily, which was so far pleasant. They arrived there about two, and found her little ladyship in her drawing-room, teaching her small Skye dog to beg. It must be owned it formed rather a pretty picture: the elegant little woman, in her rich dress of blue poplin profusely trimmed with velvet, a small Honiton lace collar round her small white throat, and the most absurd little pretence of a cap of the same rich lace on her head; the little white silky dog sitting up, with tiny white paws folded over each other, and its shiny black nose coming through clouds of hair, and his mistress's small white hand raised to keep the little animal in position.

Lucy and Jeanie both thought it was very pretty to look at; but when the performance had gone on

a long while, and the little dog, weary of the work, kept rolling over and over, and would make himself limp when his mistress tried to set him up, they, like the dog, grew tired of the amusement, and thought it was time to change the entertainment; but until she was tired of it herself, it never struck her that others would be.

However, at length jumping up, and giving the dog a push with her small foot, which she called a kick, she asked the girls whether they would go for a walk, or if they were tired, and would prefer sitting and chatting. As they had only come from their own house a short distance, they agreed a walk would be pleasant; but they thought she never walked.

"Oh, yes I do. I often walk down to the river and along the banks ever so far, underneath the trees, by Lord What's-his-name's. I like walking very much, but I dislike walking alone; for though Skye goes with me, he can't talk, you know, but I always go out for his sake—for exercise—fancy! Sir Charles never walks now, he's so gouty; he's gone to town to-day. I was quite alone: it's so good of you to take compassion on me."

They took their walk, which passed an hour of

the time, and on their return she gave them some photograph books to look at, which amused them a little until dusk, when the man-servant brought the tea, which Lady Maudesley always indulged in between four and five, and dined at seven. The girls noticed that several cups and saucers were on the tray, and presently a ring at the gate bell announced an arrival.

"Now, who's that, I wonder, just as we were going to be so cosy? What a nuisance! The fact is, I've told two or three people I have always tea and chat here at five, so they drop in."

"Mr. Hamersfort and Captain O'Reilly," announced the servant.

"Oh! how d'ye do?" she said, giving them the tips of her little fingers; "you horrid creatures, what possessed you to come this evening when I did not want you in the least?"

"Shall we go?" said young Hamersfort, with what he no doubt considered a very fascinating smile.

"Not this moment you needn't; you shall have a cup of tea. Lucy, love, pour it out. I hate doing that; don't you bore yourself with putting in the sugar and milk, they can manage it themselves; you

captain, are one of that barbarous class who drink tea without milk."

"I must own to it, madam," said the captain, in a rich Irish brogue, "but if it would please you, sure I'd drink milk if it poisoned me."

"Oh, no! I won't ask you to do that."

Then ensued a host of silly compliments and foolish speeches, eliciting still more foolish replies from Lady Maudesley, until Lucy and Jeanie felt thoroughly ashamed for her and themselves, and wished themselves home over and over again. Lady Maudesley, entirely engrossed with her male visitors, took very little notice of Lucy and Jeanie, and, as they dreaded, invited them to remain to dinner. However, to their great relief the gentlemen declined, and when the dressing-bell rang they rose to go.

"I was so sorry, girls, these fellows wouldn't stay," she said afterwards. "I thought it would have been such fun for you, it's so dull with only me."

"We're quite satisfied," said Lucy; "thank you."

"Oh! but when I was a girl I thought it so dull without some nice amusing young men, and Captain O'Reilly is very amusing when he likes. However,

I mean to have a little dance soon; I've talked to Sir Charles about it, and he says he's no objection, and then you must come. I mean to get you girls off—fancy! won't your mother be obliged to me?"

"I think not," said Jeanie, laughing; "she's not in the least hurry to get rid of us."

"Isn't she? Oh, my mother said she should be so glad when I was married and out of the way, when I was only eight or nine years old."

"I never heard my mother say so; I don't know what she thinks," said Jeanie; "but you know we're not out, Lady Maudesley, and so we can't come to parties."

"Oh, but you must come out this next season; how old are you?"

"Lucy is eighteen, and I'm just seventeen."

Then of course you ought to be out; it's absurd to keep you in. What do you want with a governess? I had never one after I was fifteen—fancy! I must talk to your mother about it."

Jeanie smiled to herself at the thought of the great effect this would produce on her mother, but she made no answer; and in this sort of conversation the dinner (which was very elegant) and the evening passed away, and it was with great satisfac-

tion the girls heard the announcement that the carriage was waiting for them.

When they reached home, of course Mr. and Mrs. Deane were most anxious to know what sort of a day the girls had passed.

Jeanie, who was generally spokeswoman, related the events of the day, especially the visit of the officers.

"Did she really ask them to dinner?" said Mrs. Deane.

"Yes, mamma, really."

"After asking my advice on the very subject? She is indeed a silly woman; the men showed their sense in not staying."

"My dear," said Mr. Deane, looking up from his paper, "there's no occasion for the girls to go there again, I think."

"Not the least, dear; good-night, girls."

"Good-night, mother dear, we're glad to go and sleep off the drowsy sensation produced by our lively visit."

When the door closed on them, Mr. Deane said, "Never let those children go there any more, Adelaide; they are so fresh, natural, and sensible now, I should be sorry for them to be contaminated by such an example, or have them talked of by the

officers whom that very silly woman encourages at her house; it is so easy to take the bloom from the peach, and I should like my peaches to retain theirs as long as possible."

"I quite agree with you, dear, but I was really in difficulty to know how to get out of this without positive rudeness; another time I must invent an engagement."

"Do, by all means; are the boys gone to bed?"

"Yes, they were tired."

"Then we will follow their example, and turn in; they have got a long expedition before them to-morrow: Sir Harry Beauchamp has given them a day's rabbit-shooting."

"Oh, I'm glad of that; what a dear boy Everard is! he grows nicer and nicer."

"He is, indeed: now, if he some day would take a fancy to one of my peaches?"

"Ah, dear Mark, but we must not build castles: they are always blown over."

But Mr. Deane had only been giving words to the thoughts which were often busy in the mother's brain. To see her gentle, good Lucy the wife of one she loved and esteemed so much as Hugh Everard, would be the height of her ambition.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE next morning at breakfast the post-bag bore much of interest for the little party assembled there, for it contained a long letter from Mrs. Bridgenorth for Lucy, and one from Amy Stapleton for Jeanie. She looked across at Francis, and smiled as she said, "It's from Amy;" but her face saddened as she read; and folding up the letter in its envelope, she made no comment until her mother said—

"Well, how is Amy?"

"Not very well, mother dear. I'll show you the letter presently. What's Mrs. Bridgenorth say, Lucy?"

"Such a nice letter—she seems so happy. Shall I read it out loud?"

"By all means," said the father, "'pro bono publico.'"

Lucy began:—

"DEAREST LUCY,—I hope you have not all thought me ungrateful for not sooner writing to you. I have had you all in my thoughts, especially on Christmas morning, and in our own church prayed that God would bless you all! I am sure it is needless to tell you that I am very happy—almost frightened at my happiness. To see the dear face beside me, and hear the voice and step which I thought never to hear again, is such joy! But I must not go on on this topic—your own affectionate nature can realise and believe all this, without my writing it. So I will proceed to tell you a little of what we are doing.

"My dear husband was most warmly welcomed in London, and steps are being taken to get him some compensation from Government for his unjust imprisonment, which we have some hope will be successful. Mr. Maclellan invited us to his house until we could get one to suit us; and we could not have been better treated. He is very rich, and has a lovely house at Ealing. The day before yesterday we came into this, our own dear little home; and I feel like a child with a new toy—it's such a pretty little miniature place, like Carry's doll's house; the

kitchen, tell her, quite reminds me of hers; the little dresser, and tables and chairs, all of nice white deal, the bright tins on the mantelpiece, all delight me beyond description. Though it is all so small, it is so perfectly commodious. A delightful little room next to the kitchen is my store-room, and I know, Lucy dear, you would have been amused to see me arranging it—cutting up the bars of soap and laying them in the drawer, and the different sorts of candles in their drawers, the jars with rice, and currants, and sugar, which I labelled all myself. Oh, you don't know how busy and happy I felt; and when I looked up, fancying I heard some one, there stood my darling goose of an Ernest, watching me with such amusement. He got the house all in perfect order before he allowed me to come home; and it is so pretty. I hope your dear mother will allow you to come and see me. I have the sweetest of little spare bed-rooms—not like your own handsome rooms, dear, but very pretty, with a nice look-out from the window over the Surrey hills. When the cold winter is gone and the monthly roses which clamber all over my pretty cottage are in bloom, I shall hope my dear Lucy will honour me with a visit. And now good-bye, my dear, dear, kind friends.

Kiss my precious May for me, and always believe me,

"Your most affectionate friend,
"M. BRIDGENORTH."

"Dear thing, she does seem happy," said Lucy, as she finished reading.

"Yes, indeed. Where is her house?" asked Mr. Deane.

"She dates 'The Rosary, Dulwich.'"

"Oh, I know; a very pretty place to live in too."

"She would not like to have lived quite in London after so many years' residence in the country," said Mrs. Deane. "Have we all done breakfast?"

"I think so. Francis, you have not done much."

"Oh, yes, thank you, father; no more for me. We must start soon, musn't we?"

"Yes; the sooner you're off the better."

"Come along, Everard, then. Oh, Jeanie, I want you a minute—just to sew a button on for me."

"Yes, I'll come. Go into the school-room; my workbox is there."

She followed him up-stairs; he closed the door of the school-room, and then said—

"Jeanie, what's the matter with Amy Stapleton?"

"Oh, she isn't just the thing, she says—had a cold, I suppose. Where's the button that wants sewing on—rather, the thing it wants sewing on?"

"Here, my glove. But, Jeanie, that is not all. Your face told more; do speak the truth."

"Well, dear, she says she has a very bad cough, and is ordered abroad. She or Emily will write again and tell us where they are."

"Is that all?" he asked quite quietly.

"Yes; the letter is very short."

"Thank you. Good-bye, Jeanie.

"Good-bye, old boy; give me a kiss. I shall write to dear Amy to-night, and tell her that I hope soon to hear better accounts of her."

"Do," he said. "Good-bye," and he left the room without another word.

"Jeanie dear," called Mrs. Deane, "can you come to me a moment?"

"Yes, mamma."

"What is this," asked her mother, "about Amy Stapleton? You seemed mysterious."

"I will give you the letter, dear; it has made me quite sad."

Mrs. Deane took the letter, and read as follows:—

"DEAREST JEANIE,—I can only write a few lines, but I wanted to write to you myself. I have not felt well ever since I saw you—my happy, happy visit to Oatlands. But the last few weeks I have been much worse, and am now ordered abroad. Mamma and Emily go with me, and papa joins us. I believe we go to Nice, but Emily will write and tell you. My cough shakes me so I cannot write more.

"Your loving friend,

"AMY."

"That doesn't look well, certainly," said Mrs. Deane, as she refolded the note, and gave it back to Jeanie.

"No, mamma dear, does it?"

"Why did you not wish to name it at breakfast?"

Jeanie grew rather red as she answered:—

"Because of Francis, mamma. I thought he would be so grieved, and I had better ask you first what to tell him; but he came up after me and insisted on knowing."

"You think there is a tenderness in that quarter, then, do you, Jeanie?"

"Oh, yes, mamma, I think they are both very fond of each other."

"She's a very sweet girl, and I am seriously sorry to hear of her illness. I trust that taking the matter in time will stop any serious mischief. What did Francis say?"

"Very little indeed; but I think it was because he could not speak, poor boy. Should you like Francis to marry Amy, mamma?"

"Well, my dear, there is plenty of time for Francis to think of marrying, but when the time arrives, I should be very well pleased for him to marry so sweet and amiable a girl, but certainly not if there is anything like consumption about her."

"No, that would be sad to think of. Mamma, why do people laugh and scoff at very young folks loving each other?—what is there to laugh at?"

"Nothing really to laugh at, dear. Love—real love—is far too sacred a subject for a laugh at any time; and there are few things do more harm, I believe, than that silly way, too common amongst us, of teasing and joking about it. If it is true and real, it is too holy and beautiful to be laughed at; if

not, it is too silly and wrong to be noticed at all. Some young girls and young men are very susceptible, and really do love very heartily and very sincerely when they are very young; but if they have refined minds they will never expose their secret to be made a common jest of. The reason older people laugh at their loves, I believe, is, because the first passion is generally a very romantic one, investing its object with every perfection under the sun, and the rude awakening from this dream which must inevitably follow, makes them give up their idol, and so bring on themselves the laughter of older and wiser heads, who, judging by experience, had said from the beginning—'Oh, that won't last.'"

"But, mamma, did no one ever marry their first love."

"Oh, dear, yes; such things have happened, but not very often when the parties are very young. I have known cases of young men of three or four and twenty marrying their first loves; but they are rare. However, my dear child, it is too early in the morning for us to discuss the tender passion—more practical, sober matters are awaiting us, I suspect. I am going with your father to see his new cottages, as we hope to get the poor Martins out of their

old tumble-down place next week, and install them in one of the new ones. And your father wishes me to see if I can suggest anything more to be done for them."

"Poor things! what a delightful change for them. I'm going to grandmamma; she will wonder where I am. Lucy is there already, I dare say."

"Yes, and tell her, love, about poor Amy."

"Yes, mamma, I will."

The boys during this time were pursuing their way to Sir Harry Beauchamp's, and were some considerable distance on the way before Francis spoke, until at length Everard said—

"Why, Deane, old fellow, what's the matter with you?"

"Me? eh? Oh, nothing!"

"You're so silent."

"I was thinking. Do you remember Amy Stapleton?"

"What, the girl who played in the proverb? I should think I did. A lovely little creature."

"Yes, poor thing! Jeanie has had a letter, saying she's got an awful cough, and is ordered abroad."

"No, you don't mean it. Poor little soul! What! going into a consumption?"

"God forbid! But it sounds frightfully like it. I tell you what, Everard, if that girl dies my life will not be worth much to me."

"Die—oh, no! she has youth on her side, and taken in time she'll get well again, you'll see. But I say, you're young to begin this sort of game."

"I know; and it seems such folly, I should never mention it to any one but you, and if I had not been so miserable about her, I should not have mentioned it now. Years ago, when we were quite little things, she came to stay at our house, and I said to myself then, 'That girl shall be my wife;' and if she is not, Everard, I'll have no other."

"Well, then, you have my best wishes that she may be, for she seems a pretty, sweet little body; but I never saw any girls anywhere that come up to your sisters,—they're so fresh and sensible, and unaffected. There's none of that giggling nonsense about them that one sees in most girls."

"I am sure there's no nonsense about Amy."

"No, I don't say there is; but Lucy and Jeanie are so bright and clever—so full of fun, and yet always stopping short of that 'fast' manner which is so detestable. I've seen girls so shy and quiet and pretty-behaved before their mothers, and go on

in such a style afterwards, that I was thankful I'd no sisters. Now, your sisters are always the same, before your mother and behind her back."

"You had better marry one of them, Everard. I know I should like nothing better, old boy."

"Ah! I haven't thought about such things yet, Francis. I'm not inclined to lose my liberty so early. Besides, I rather think I should disappoint the old governor, who has picked me out some one."

"Oh, Everard, you're surely not going to have a wife chosen for you? I never could stand that."

"Oh, I don't mind,—saves one a wonderful deal of trouble,—and I would rather marry a girl the dear old father liked. He *has* been a father to me."

"Yes, that's very true. Gratitude and dutiful affection are all quite right and proper, but I do think each man should choose his wife for himself. That is a subject in which no earthly person has a right to interfere."

"I admit, no right; but if you are heart-whole, and have no particular fancy, is it not better to marry some one whom your father, the being you love best on earth, likes you to marry? She is to be

his daughter, you know, so he has some interest in the matter, you'll admit."

"And who is this lady? Have you ever seen her?"

"I believe I have; but he never will tell me. He only admits that among his acquaintances there is a girl he should like for a daughter-in-law. She is the only child of his oldest friend—if it's the one I mean—and lots of tin. But, as I said before, I have not troubled myself about such matters yet. When do your sisters come out?"

"Next season, I believe."

"I shall be curious to know which is the most popular."

"There is no question, I think," said Francis. "Lucy is so much the prettiest, and is really almost an angel in goodness."

"Is she as amiable as Jeanie?"

"Amiable as Jeanie? I should think so, indeed!"

"She so often puts her sisters down, as if she only was always right, which rather spoils her, I think."

"Because she is always right herself, and is anxious that they should be."

"Oh! I should be afraid of such a good wife. I am rather afraid of Lucy myself now."

"I'm not. Bless her, she's a darling! But here we are at the lodge." And as he spoke, they drove through the gates of Sir Harry Beauchamp's park, where they were to spend the day in rabbit shooting.

CHAPTER XV.

THE holidays wore away, and Everard was gone back to his tutor's, and Francis for his last half at Eton, and Miss Beatson was installed at Oatlands. She had been duly introduced to grandmamma, who had given her entire approval, more particularly as Miss Beatson was of her opinion as regards the domestic education of her pupils. She was certainly not so clever as Miss Barton, but she was more generally useful—had seen more of the world than she had, and was much gayer, and more cheerful; but still, much as they liked her, they all kept their allegiance to their former gentle governess, except Jeanie, who was charmed with Miss Beatson.

"I wonder if she keeps a journal?" said Jeanie, laughing. "Poor, dear Miss Barton, that was a wonderful affair!"

"It was, indeed. I think Carry was most thoroughly

ashamed of herself," said Lucy, "and would never be guilty of such an act again."

"I do like Miss Beatson so very much," said Jeanie. "I shall really be quite sorry to give up lessons. You know, I suppose, that I am to give up in the summer."

"Well, I heard papa and mamma talking it over, but I didn't know if it was quite settled."

"Yes, I believe it is. Papa says we are so near of an age, we ought to come out together. And do you know, Lucy, I heard papa talk of taking a house in London for the season, and having us presented, and all sorts of things. Shall you like it, Lucy?"

"Yes, I think I shall. Emily Stapleton gives such brilliant accounts of London parties, that I think I should like one season."

"Poor, dear little Amy! will she ever go to parties again, I wonder? I sent Emily's letter to Francis last night. I thought he had better know all the truth," said Jeanie.

"Yes, poor boy! I wonder almost we've not heard from Francis. I suppose he's working tremendously hard. I hope the news about Amy won't prevent his working. Papa will be so disappointed if he does not do well."

"I trust he will, I'm sure. How nice it would be going to see him at Cambridge! But then, if dear Amy gets well, and he marries her, he will have to give his fellowship up, if he gets one, won't he?"

"Yes, of course," answered Lucy, "if he does not marry before he becomes a fellow, and I do not suppose he would, for papa would persuade him to wait until he is a reasonable age. Mrs. Stapleton wouldn't like Amy to marry a boy."

"She will have some money, will she not?"

"Yes, a nice little property when she is of age, if she lives to be, poor dear. Lady Beaumont, her godmother, left it her."

"Then if Francis, as he talks of, takes to the bar, they may live very comfortably. I think he wishes to be a barrister."

"What is Everard going to be?"

"A clergyman, I believe; he wanted to be a sailor, but it made his father so unhappy, he gave it up, and as there is a living in the family, he is to take orders. I am sure he will make an excellent clergyman."

"That he will, bless him!" answered Jeanie.

Lucy smiled.

"What are you smiling at," said Jeanie.

"Your enthusiasm."

"Well, you mean it, and I say it and mean it too, that's the difference."

"It is not always quite wise to say what we mean, dear. I have heard that words were given us to conceal our thoughts."

"But that's not honest."

"I think it may be done honestly, Jeanie dear. Do you not remember your favourite Shakspeare speaks of 'wearing your heart upon your sleeve for daws to peck at.' I think you rather do that, by so openly expressing your feelings."

"I daresay I do, and I know I often wonder how you can keep in all you feel so much. I hardly ever know when you like a person, and when you don't —but, good gracious, there's the gatebell. It's Giuglietto, I do believe, and I'm not ready,—are you?"

"Yes, I always get ready the day before."

"Of course: what an ape I was to ask you. Oh! here's Miss Beatson! Dear Miss Beatson, do help me, I'm in an awful fix."

"What is it, Jeanie? I'm ready."

"Yes, and I'm not, for Giuglietto."

"I am afraid I cannot help you, then, for here he is." The door opened as she spoke, and the Signor entered.

Jeanie requested that Lucy might be taken first, as she might then have time to complete her exercise, which with Miss Beatson's help she managed to do.

Jeanie had not been able to find any more materials for the romance she had begun to weave between Miss Beatson and Mr. Griffiths, and had begun to think that she must have been mistaken. And now a circumstance again happened, which reawakened her interest in the matter.

Just as they were finishing their studies with their master, Mrs. Deane opened the schoolroom door, and said Mr. Griffiths wished to speak a few words to Miss Beatson. She did not seem at all astonished, but quietly put down her book, and, asking which room he was in, went down-stairs.

"Now, Lucy, what do you think?"

"Think of what?"

"Why, of Mr. Griffiths wanting to speak to Miss Beatson?"

"Why, I don't think at all about it; he has very likely got a message from the Walkers for her."

This very probable and unromantic suggestion stopped Jeanie's wonderful imaginations, and Miss Beatson soon returned and resumed her employment without making any comment, though a

strange amused smile rested on her lips, which of course was not lost on the all-observant Jeanie.

Nothing occurred of any moment to disturb the serenity of the household at Oatlands for some time, until a letter from Everard came for Mr. Deane, saying that his tutor had suggested the advisability of his going abroad, and his father, much to his surprise, consenting, he was going with another young fellow and his tutor for a tour on the continent. He wished to know if they would give him dinner and a bed one night before he went, as he should like to wish them all good-by. Of course the reply was in the affirmative, and he came. He appeared delighted at the thoughts of his trip, and said that he should work all the time he was away, and then he should be ready for his matriculation on his return.

"You will let us hear of you while you are away, will you not?" said Mrs. Deane.

"Yes, certainly; it would be most ungrateful of me if I did not, after all your kindness to me."

"We shall always be glad to hear of you, my boy," said Mr. Deane.

"Thank you; and I must write to you, May, must I not?" he said, putting his arm round the little

creature, who had been allowed to breakfast downstairs on that last morning of his stay at Oatlands. Poor little girl, she had told him he was very, very naughty to go away from her over the sea, and she should never be happy till he came back again. But he was not prepared for the passionate weeping, and the convulsive clinging to his neck, when the moment of departure arrived. Her little arms had to be unlaced from his neck, and she sobbed so long afterwards that she sunk at last into an exhausted sleep. This excitement with the child prevented anyone observing a very pale face standing at the hall-door, to watch the dog-cart away which had come to fetch Everard. May's vehement grief had quite upset him, and he had rushed through the hall hastily, shaking hands with the three girls and their mother, never observing that one hand was colder than all the rest, and one voice could not utter "Good-by."

"It is colder than ever this morning," said Lucy, kneeling down on the rug before the drawing-room fire, when the cart had driven away, and the hall-door was closed."

"Oh, Lucy, I was thinking it was milder. Why, your hands are as cold as charity. But I must run:

Miss Beatson's waiting for me. That darling boy—think of his going so far away from us all!" and away ran Jeanie up-stairs, singing—

> "So I tell them they need not come wooing to me,
> For my heart, my heart is over the sea;"

and Lucy knelt still on the drawing-room rug, gazing into the fire.

"I suppose," said Miss Beatson, as Jeanie came into the room, "it is not to be expected much study can be done this morning after the departure of this hero?"

"Well, it has rather obscured our perceptions, I fear. The geography of France and Germany, Italy and Switzerland, might interest us, perhaps."

"I never saw a child so upset as May. Poor little thing; she's asleep in Hannah's lap, with the large tears still wet on her cheeks. What is there so marvellously fascinating about this youngster, to have turned the heads of a whole family of girls?"

"Don't say a whole family, Miss Beatson," said Carry. "I don't care anything at all about him."

"No; Carry likes that delightful Albert Warleigh much better," said Jeanie.

"I think he's much cleverer than Everard."

"Pooh! Carry, say you don't know. But, Miss Beatson, don't you like Everard?"

"I have seen so little of him. He seems a quiet gentlemanly young fellow enough; but nothing out of the common."

"Ah! that's just what we think he is; very much out of the common. He's so unselfish, so considerate for other people, so observant of all their little likes and dislikes, and that is so very winning, and so unlike a boy."

"He certainly possesses the power of pleasing in an eminent degree, for I have heard your mother and father speak in equally high terms of him. But now, really, if we mean to do anything at all this morning, we must get to work. Is Lucy coming?"

"I think not; she is busy with mamma at something. I say, Miss Beatson, do ask mamma if to-morrow we may have a morning at cooking."

"I have asked her, and she has given me a piece of English that she wishes you to put into French, German, and Italian, and back again into English, in your own words; and if you can do this, she will allow you to make all the pastry—on Gough's pastry day—and anything else in the cooking way I like to show you."

"Oh! Miss Beatson, both of us? Lucy and me, too?

"Any one who wanted to cook—but she says she must be thoroughly convinced you are not quite ignorant before she allows you to waste time in culinary performances."

"You haven't told about the dress—have you?"

"Oh, no; that is to surprise her."

"Yes, I shall put it on, and come down in it. Made and cut out all myself."

"Yes, and we won't say anything about the sleeves being put in the wrong arm-holes, Jeanie."

"Jeanie's first attempt, Carry," said Miss Beatson. "When you can make yourself a dress with as few mistakes as Jeanie, I shall consider you cleverer than you are now."

"Mamma doesn't want us to be clever about that," said Carry, pertly.

"I think mamma wants you to be clever about everything. Now let me see that sum, so that I my judge if you've been clever at that." And so they began in earnest to work, until the luncheon bell stopped their labours for the morning.

The afternoons Miss Beatson devoted to work and reading. She read aloud, whilst the girls all worked, and then she questioned them fully on what they had heard; and they had at the end of

the week to produce an abstract of the whole. Carry did this so well, that Miss Beatson used laughingly to say, that she must really publish her "Abstract of French History for the use of Families and Schools." Mrs. Deane was much pleased with the plan, as it combined most useful things—facility of composition, correct spelling, and was a fine exercise of memory. Of course poor Jeanie came off worse, as she declared she could not remember what had been read for a week. What she heard one day put the other out of her head, so that hers was certainly a very abbreviated "History of Scotland?" and some of the reigns were like the play of Hamlet, with the part of Hamlet left out.

However, she succeeded better with the task set her by her mother. Languages were her great forte, and the piece of English was arrayed in its three foreign garbs, and triumphantly brought to mamma, to purchase the day's immunity from literary pursuits, and substitute culinary ones. The consent was obtained; and greatly to poor Gough's disgust, Miss Beatson and Jeanie took possession of paste-board and roller, flour-bin and butter, eggs and cream, tins and basins—in short, a battery of cooking utensils; and prepared to make pastry enough

to last a week. The success was greater than she believed, and she was compelled to confess Miss Beatson was accomplished in the art, and would soon succeed in making Miss Jeanie so. Grandmamma was charmed, and ate with the greatest satisfaction a tart made, as Jeanie said, "all my own self."

Of course, a long letter was duly sent to Mrs. Bridgenorth, relating to the new accomplishment; and in reply, she assured Jeanie she only wished she had had similar instructions, for she had found the only misery in her delightful home was caused by her incompetent servants. A cook she could not get who could cook anything decently; and as she could not show or teach them, she was obliged to bear in silent sorrow to see her husband unable, day after day, to eat the dinner provided for him. She had been driven at last to invest in a cookery book, and strive to instruct herself; and she only hoped she should prove as apt a scholar as Jeanie.

A day or two after this cooking performance, Lucy and Jeanie were chatting together in the school-room, before recommencing the afternoon studies, when a sound in the house arrested their attention.

"Who on earth is that singing?" said Jeanie.

"Hush! Listen!" said Lucy. "How beautiful!" Breathlessly they both stood, listening, as the rich tones of some glorious voice pealed through the house.

"Who can it be?" whispered Jeanie. "Let us steal down the back-stairs and see."

"Oh, no; it's some one calling on mamma, perhaps," said Lucy.

"I shall go," and Jeanie glided softly and swiftly down the back-stairs, and there, outside the drawing-room door, she could see across the hall Mr. Griffiths, standing listening. Her mother came down the front-stairs at the moment. Mr. Griffiths, hearing a footstep, turned, and bowing to Mrs. Deane, said—

"I must apologise most humbly, Mrs. Deane; but I would not allow the servant to introduce me and disturb those glorious sounds."

"I can't think who is making those said 'glorious sounds,' Mr. Griffiths—I was just coming to see, myself."

"I believe it to be Miss Beatson," he said, as he threw open the drawing-room door to admit Mrs. Deane, and Jeanie ran up to tell Lucy what she

had heard. Miss Beatson jumped up from the piano as they entered.

"Why, Miss Beatson, you have astonished us all."

"Have I?" she said, smiling. "I was only passing a few idle moments."

"But why have you not before given us such a treat?"

"I should not have ventured now had I known there were listeners. I thought everyone was out."

"I must still ask why you deny us the gratification of listening to you?"

"I seldom sing," she answered, evasively.

Mr. Griffiths, bending down, uttered some reply, which recalled the merry smile to her lips; and saying the girls wanted her, she ran up-stairs.

Mrs. Deane begged Mr. Griffiths to be seated; and he conversed on indifferent subjects, till Mrs. Deane began to wonder what had brought him. At length, as he rose to go, he said, blushing very much as he spoke:

"I have come—the principal object of my visit—that is to say—that I am going to be married."

"Indeed! Allow me to congratulate you. And may I ask the bride's name?"

"Miss Walker—Helen."

"Oh, really! It's quite news to me. Has it been a long engagement?"

"Well, not exactly an engagement until the last few days—we have understood one another. Now I have a small living, and so we are to be married directly."

"Pray," said Mrs. Deane, "take my congratulations to the bride elect, and say that I shall do myself the pleasure of offering them to her in person shortly. When is the wedding to be?"

"The first week in April."

After a few more words, Mr. Griffiths departed, and Mrs. Deane went to the school-room.

"Girls, I've brought you some news," she said, as she entered.

"Oh, mamma, what?"

"Mr. Griffiths is going to be married."

Jeanie instinctively looked up at Miss Beatson.

"To whom, mamma?" asked Lucy. "Miss Walker?"

"Yes, Miss Walker."

"I have known it sometime," said Miss Beatson, smiling.

"Well, I dare say they'll make a very nice couple."

"Yes; quite young folks—well suited to each other," said Miss Beatson.

Jeanie was more puzzled than ever.

"We have been asking Miss Beatson why she never sang to us before, mamma, and she says she had a reason, and she will sing to us whenever we like now," said Lucy.

"That will be very charming; as long as she will sing, we will not ask too curiously why she has not done so before. You have a wonderful voice, Miss Beatson."

"Do you think so? I am very fond of singing. At one time I thought of employing my voice for my subsistence, but mamma did not like the idea of it."

"We shall hope to be charmed most evenings now. Mr. Deane is so fond of music, and often regrets that his girls are not proficients."

"We must learn some duets and trios together, and make a family concert."

"Ay, do; that would enchant Mr. Deane."

Jeanie was sitting that night with her feet on the fender in her bed-room, thinking over the events of

the day, when a tap at her door startled her from her reverie.

"Who's there?"

"Me—Miss Beatson."

Jeanie jumped up at once, and let her in.

"I thought, Jeanie, you were dying of a mystery, wondering about my singing, and a variety of little matters which I see have not escaped your observant eye; so I have come to enlighten you. Should you like to be enlightened?"

"Oh! so much! You have puzzled me."

"Yes, ever since Mr. Griffiths started when he saw me in the school?"

"You noticed it?"

"Of course I did. Now I will tell you all about it, that what appears like mystery may all dissolve like snow in sunshine. Some years ago my mother, sister, and myself went to Clifton. My mother was ill, and ordered change of air. Things, in a worldly point of view, were very bright with us then, and we were able to take rooms at a first-class hotel, and very happy and comfortable we were. We had not been there long before I found I had attracted the notice of a young clergyman, and that wherever I went he managed to be there too. It became a joke

amongst us, and greatly amused my dear mother, who used to whisper to me, 'There's your parson,' whenever we saw him. At length we discovered he was in the same hotel, having been sent to Clifton for his health, to reinstate him after a severe attack of sore throat. There was a piano in our sitting-room, and I used to sing of an evening to amuse my mother. The balcony of his sitting-room joined ours, and the moment I began to sing, he came out and stood in his balcony, greatly, I used to think, to the detriment of his throat, listening until I had finished singing. He left Clifton quite suddenly before we did, and we never met again until the other day in the school-room. I saw he recognised me, but soon perceiving the state of affairs between him and Helen, I endeavoured to mystify him, and pretend utter ignorance of him. I knew my voice would betray me, and so, during my visit to the Walkers, determined never to sing. I am passionately fond of it, and it was a great act of self-denial to refrain from doing what I loved so much; but I have little faith in the constancy of man, and I feared that I might interfere between him and Helen, which I would not have done for worlds. I own, too, that to mystify him rather amused me, so

that when he began one evening in a marked manner to speak of Clifton, I said what a pretty place I had heard it was, as though I had not been there."

"But did the Walkers never talk of your singing?"

"No; how should they? They had never heard me. They seldom use their drawing-room, in which the piano stands, unless they have company, and of course I did not say, 'I sing beautifully; should you not like to hear me?' and therefore, since the Clifton days, he never heard me sing until the other day here, and then he whispered, 'You can no longer deceive me.' And so I ran out of the room up to you as quickly as I could; not alarmed then, though, for a day or two before he had brought me a note from poor Helen, telling me it was all settled, and they were to be married. I did not care then how soon he knew it, for I believe him to be a good, honourable man, and that once engaged, he would consider himself married. We shall be able to laugh over it together, now."

"Thank you, much, Miss Beatson, for telling me," said Jeanie.

"Notwithstanding, I have thrown down the fabric of a little romance you had been concocting, eh, Jeanie?"

"No, I am very well satisfied; for I was right so far. You *had* met before, and he *did* start when he saw you, and he was *once* in love with you."

"Oh, stay; I never went so far as to state that. I interested him for some reason, and he liked my singing; and for that matter, so did the little butchers' and doctors' boys in the streets, who used to do as he did,—stand and listen. I think it possible that had he been quite sure I was the person he had seen at Clifton, before he was irrevocably engaged to Helen, it might have altered him, and for that reason, partly, I acted as I did. It would indeed have been cruel to have made poor Helen wretched, by taking from her what I had not myself the least value for."

"You would not have married him, then?"

"Oh dear, no, thank you; not if he had been the Last Man himself. But I must not keep you up one moment longer. Good-night, dear. Go to bed, contented to know that there is no romance connected with your second governess, but that

she is the most practical, sober-minded body imaginable."

She kissed Jeanie heartily, and was soon in bed herself, sleeping the dreamless sleep of perfect health and innocence.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE London season was at its height; town had seldom been more full; and in a house in May Fair the Deanes—Mr. and Mrs., Lucy and Jeanie, that is to say—were installed, to the intense satisfaction of the girls, their father having taken it for the season: they were to be presented on the following Thursday, and were looking forward to it with mingled feelings of pleasure and alarm. On the following Friday they were going to a large ball, on Saturday to the Opera, and on Monday to a breakfast, so that their first season had begun gaily enough. Francis was to join them as soon as his holidays commenced, and Miss Beatson was left at home in charge of the two little ones and grandmamma. They had had several letters from Everard, who was intensely enjoying his trip, he said; his last was full of interest to them, for in it he spoke of having met the Stapletons; that Amy

was still very far from well, but a foreign physician of eminence had seen her, and pronounced her malady hysteria, that there was no sign or symptom of consumption about her, and that instead of confining her to one place they must take her about and amuse her; Everard went on to say she was looking very pale, but that at the name of Francis, her face was at once covered with a beautiful bloom, and that he thought a letter from him would do her a great deal of good. This caused a great deal of conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Deane, and they finally decided to send the letter to Francis to read; for though they doubted not that Everard had written the same to him, still they judged if they sent the letter he would see they had no objection to his writing to her if he wished.

"He is very young, certainly," said Mrs. Deane; "but I believe that an attachment to a good little girl like Amy Stapleton may keep him straight in the midst of the temptations of a college life. If it eventually comes to nothing, it will do him no harm, and may do him much good. I am not one of the objectors to a long engagement; there is much said against it, but I never could see the argument. If it is broken off it is because the parties discover some

impediment to their happiness, and surely that is better before than after marriage. I have no opinion of the "marrying in haste to repent at leisure." If Francis and Amy love each other, only let them love, and marry when they're old enough." And so the letter was sent to Francis: and soon after little trembling white hands opened and read a letter closely written on foreign paper, which, having been read and re-read, was laid upon a little throbbing heart, and kept beneath a certain pillow till replaced by another of the same kind, and daily Amy Stapleton grew better and stronger. One morning the girls, —who had been very late at a ball over night— had just determined to rouse themselves from their weary jaded feel by a brisk walk in the park, when they were startled by a ring at the visitors' bell.

"It must be some mistake," said Jeanie; "who would call so early? A tradesman has rung the wrong bell."

But no: footsteps were ascending the stairs, the door was thrown open, and the servant announced "Mr. Hugh Everard."

Both girls sprang forward with a slight cry, but only one extended her hand, with an eager "Oh!

dear Everard, I am so glad to see you: when did you come?"

"Last night, only," he answered; "should you have known me?"

"Yes, anywhere; but I must own the moustache and whiskers make a wonderful difference."

"They were decidedly in their infancy when I went away, were they not? And are you all quite well?"

"Yes, very well," the other sister found voice at last to say; "your little May is not here."

"Oh! is she not, dear little woman, I must pay my respects to her when I go home. I have some Swiss toys for her."

"How kind of you to think of her."

"And Mrs. Deane, I hope she is at home? I came at this early hour, *sans ceremonie*."

"Oh! we are so glad you did," said Jeanie; "I will fetch mamma: she will be astonished and delighted to see you."

"I'll go, Jeanie," said Lucy, hurriedly; "I would rather." And before Jeanie could prevent her she was gone.

"I don't think your sister looks well," said Everard.

"She is tired—we both are—we have been so

horribly dissipated; but it is such fun. I delight in it. We were presented: that was more awful than amusing; but Lucy looked so lovely. And we've been to such exquisite balls—Oh, Everard, the music drives me wild! I could dance till I dropped to it."

"I thought you would enjoy your first season. I shall come to town and do a little gaiety after I have been home to see the dear old man. I am afraid I cannot lure him up with me; he says he has done with such frivolities."

"It would be nice if he would come, you could stay longer. Here comes mamma."

"My dear Everard," said Mrs. Deane, entering the room, followed by Lucy, and extending both her hands to him, "welcome back to England. Where are you staying, and what are you doing?"

"I only arrived last night. Francis, in a letter I received in Paris, told me you were here. I slept at the Grosvenor, and came straight here this morning."

"And you'll stay all day with us, then, now you are come?"

"If you will let me, I will stay till luncheon. After that, I must hasten home to my father, who will be counting the minutes till I arrive."

"Oh yes, of course—poor old man! but you will come back to town after a time. Won't you, before the season is over?"

"Yes, I must come and see a little life before I go to College, and begin sobering down."

"Exactly; you matriculate in October, I suppose?"

"Yes; and I have worked hard enough to take a little respite now, for I have kept up the work with my tutor all the time we have been away. He's a capital fellow, and manages to mix work and play admirably. I have thoroughly enjoyed myself without wasting my time."

"That's a very pleasant reflection."

"And you saw poor Amy? At least we need not call her 'poor' now, for she is getting quite well and strong."

"Yes," said Everard, laughing. "I understand Dr. Francis Deane has been a wonderful doctor. Young lovers, Mrs. Deane, are they not?"

"They are, indeed; but in a very happy dream at present."

"From which, I am sure, I hope they will not awaken. They will make a charming couple," said Everard, heartily.

"Yes, I think they will do very well together;

but Francis must get employment first. "A man without something to do, if he is ever so wealthy even, is a miserable object—a nuisance to himself, and every one else."

"I quite agree with you. A man should make himself employment. What is the news at Oatlands? Anything happened?"

"Nothing beyond the marriage of Miss Walker to Mr. Griffiths, and the arrival of Mr. Griffiths' substitute, whom, I am sorry to say, we do not like so well."

"Oh no, Everard; he is awful—with bright red hair," said Jeanie.

"Perhaps he will do for Annabella Warleigh? She is not married yet, I suppose."

"No; and her mother does nothing but complain of her, and would be most thankful to be rid of her."

"What do you think of making up to her now, Everard?" said Jeanie mischievously.

"She has been too strictly brought up for me. I think she would be too good."

"I asked Mrs. Warleigh," said Mrs. Deane, "if she intended giving Annabella a season in London. She was excessively indignant at the thought of it, and said, *she* did not require to drag her girls about

from one ball to another, to get them married. She kept them quietly at their duties at home, where they were more likely to make respectable marriages."

"What a severe remark; didn't you feel it?"

"Oh, excessively! Poor Mrs. Warleigh. She never can say anything that's pleasant; but now shall we have a constitutional before lunch. The girls look as though some air, this lovely morning, would do them good."

"Yes, mamma dear," said Lucy, "we were just going when Everard arrived."

"Then let us all go together," said Mrs. Deane, "and get an appetite for luncheon. Mr. Deane will be home then, and delighted to see you Everard. What train do you want to go by?"

"Oh, 5·20 will do very well for me. That train will bring me in nice time for dinner."

"Then we need not alter our luncheon. Now run off, and get ready, girls."

As they went up stairs, Mrs. Deane said,

"I think, my dear children, you must leave off calling Everard by his surname only; it must be Mr. Everard, or Hugh, now he is a young man."

"We will try, mamma, but it will be difficult," they answered, as they entered their own room.

They were not long, and soon came down in the

prettiest of hats, and Indian silk dresses, with jackets of the same; so that Everard had no need to be ashamed of the elegant looking girls, and their equally well-dressed mother, when he met a string of Eton fellows in the park, who afterwards told him he was a lucky dog to have been walking with three of the prettiest women they had seen in London.

Mrs. Deane might certainly have passed for their elder sister, for she was fortunate in possessing that superb complexion which always gives a youthful appearance to the face; and her taste in dress being also admirable, she attracted much notice wherever she went, even now with two grown-up girls to take with her, so that Mr. Deane often laughed, and said: "The 'old lady' was making more sensation than the young ones," for which he invariably suffered tortures in his whiskers from Jeanie, who would not allow him to call "her darling, beautiful mother, an old lady."

When they returned from their walk, luncheon was ready and Mr. Deane returned. He was, of course, pleased to see Everard, and had loads of tales to tell him against Jeanie,—of the number of conquests she had made, and how she had positively destroyed the peace of mind of one whole

regiment; and when Jeanie indignantly repudiated his accusations, he asked her how about Archibald Mackenzie, and Captain Mainwaring, and Ensign Barrington, and every other name he could think of, till poor Jeanie in despair flew from her seat, and covered his mouth tight with her hands.

"And Lucy," said Everard, laughing heartily, "what of her?"

Lucy coloured to the roots of her hair at this question, and her father said, as soon as Jeanie would let him,—

"Oh, Lucy is so quiet, we never know who she slaughters. Her mischief is all done quietly. We shall never know anything about it, till it comes to 'Ask mamma.' Shall we, Lucy?"

"Mark," said Mrs. Deane, "eat your lunch, do, and let the poor girls alone. You are too bad; is he not, Everard?"

"Rather 'a teaze,' as young ladies say, I must own; but they are too well used to it to mind it."

"Oh, I don't mind," said Jeanie, as she resumed her seat, after giving her father a forgiving kiss on the top of what she called his 'shiny head,' "as long as he comes somewhere near the truth; but a whole regiment!—and naming a lot of fellows I haven't

spoken two words to. Here's the postman: who for, I wonder?"

"Six declarations for you, Jeanie, I suppose," said Everard, "according to your father's account."

"No, only one," she said, laughing, as she took a letter from the silver waiter the servant brought in. "Excuse me, mamma, dear. Oh! it's from Mrs. Bridgenorth, wanting to know if we can give her one day next week."

"Oh yes, you must try."

"I should like a quiet day, of all things, there," said Lucy.

"Yes, so should I. Suppose I fix Tuesday."

"Opera night, Jeanie."

"So it is. We must keep that open in case of some luck. Then Wednesday."

"Yes, Wednesday."

And when they rose from lunch Jeanie wrote her note, fixing Wednesday next for a long day at Dulwich with their dear Mrs. Bridgenorth.

"Will you," said Everard, just before his departure, "accept some trifles from abroad. I thought I should like to show you I had not forgotten you all, so I have brought you these;" and he put a small box into each of the girls' hands. They con-

tained beautiful little silver brooches of the finest workmanship. "This," he said, "is for you, Mrs. Deane, "if you will have it;" and she took from the little wooden box he gave her, done up in a great quantity of cotton wool, an exquisite Swiss carving of a group of deer. Of course all were much pleased with their presents, and thought it so nice of him to have remembered them.

Years and years after one little silver brooch was a treasured relic. The next morning came a long letter, in the trembling handwriting of grandmamma. She very seldom wrote, but she knew they liked to hear from her sometimes. Her letters were generally addressed to her son, but this time it was to Mrs. Deane. After detailing the chit-chat of home, and speaking in high praise of Miss Beatson, she wrote :—

"—— And how are my dear girls?—enjoying their first insight into the great world vastly, I make no doubt. Is my Lucy learning, by a closer contact with the world, that it is best to let people go their own way without a too anxious desire to set every one to rights—learning with how little thanks advice is received, and how much better is example than precept. Is my Jeanie learning that to be self-pos-

sessed and self-contained are useful virtues in the world, and that to give expression to her warm-hearted feelings will expose her more to ridicule than admiration. Such are the lessons that I would have my two dear girls learn, for I would wish them ever to remember the injunction which bids them be 'wise as serpents and harmless as doves.' God love and bless them both, and you my dear daughter, also, prays

"Your affectionate mother,

"ELIZABETH DEANE."

"Darling granny, I quite long to get home to see her again," said Jeanie. "I hope she is not lonely."

"I think not. Miss Beatson seems so attentive, and she has the little ones—May is her great darling," said Mrs. Deane.

"I wonder if May has seen Everard—Hugh, I mean—yet? Poor little thing! how delighted she will be with him. I promised to write to May, and I really must."

"I wrote to her yesterday," said Lucy.

"Oh, did you—you never told me."

"I forgot to do so. I wrote to tell her of Hugh's return. She is such an excitable little

thing, I thought if he suddenly appeared, she would be quite upset."

"That was very thoughtful of you," said Mrs. Deane. "Do you think you have either learnt the lessons granny speaks of," she continued, smiling.

"I fear not, mamma dear," said Jeanie. "I believe I shall never be wise."

"Never is a long day, Jeanie dear."

"And I'm sure then dear old Lucy will never be able to leave off trying to keep *me* in order, at any rate."

"I hope Lucy has sufficient good sense to see her fault, and to mend it."

"I hardly know what I do," said Lucy, "which people say is so wrong. I see the girls doing what I know you wouldn't like, and I tell them of it, that is all."

"Yes, my darling," said her mother, kindly, for she could see Lucy was hurt; "we all know your motive is good, but knowing this so well we would have others believe it too; and that somewhat dictatorial manner, and the constant correction of the others, gives people the impression that you consider yourself so wonderfully superior."

"What shall I do then?—not tell them when they are wrong?"

"If you can tell them kindly and privately and not before any one, they will appreciate it; and no one can then accuse you of merely correcting for the sake of showing off your own goodness."

"I will try, mamma," said Lucy, somewhat sadly, as she turned away; and Mrs. Deane, considering enough had been said, changed the subject.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE season wore on, nearly to the end, and Francis joined them. Everard had managed to get his father to town for a week or two—he loved his boy so much he would do anything for him; and many pleasant days they had had together; but at length Everard, finding the old man pined for his customary ways and habits, proposed returning to the Elms. Francis was of course very sorry to lose him, as he knew so few fellows in town, but he felt Everard was right, and never attempted to dissuade him.

Some few days after he was gone, Lucy was "tidying" Francis' drawers—a performance she always undertook herself—mending his gloves, or anything else she saw wanted attending to, and putting all his things in perfect order. She allowed no one to do this but herself; and, indeed, he would not have permitted anyone else to meddle with his property.

In one of his drawers—tossed in with some gloves,

a cigar-case, braces, a pocket-book, a meerschaum, and several odds and ends—were some fragments of a torn letter; it was a writing Lucy knew only too well—might she be forgiven for reading it?—when these words met her eye:—

"The more I see of her the more I feel there was never her equal. Do you remember a conversation with me some time before I went abroad. I do, ay, the very spot in the road where you said, 'I should like you to marry one of my sisters.'"

There was no more on that piece. Eagerly, with trembling hands, Lucy sought amongst the litter for another fragment—her eyes bright with the light of hope and love. Oh! for one little word more, to confirm and realise the joy which made every pulse throb. Yes, another piece is there! She seizes it eagerly, and reads—

"I cannot see with your eyes. The more your 'perfect' sister finds fault with her the more dear she seems. The sweet temper with which she bears it all—the genial cheerfulness of her nature—makes me feel that Jeanie—"

No more—no need for more!—Lucy had seen enough. The drawer was left open—the litter not cleared away—the glove unmended; and stealing to her own room, she flung herself on the chair beside

her bed, and burying her face in the pillow, exclaimed, with a bitter cry: "What have I done!—what have I done!"

An hour afterwards, when the luncheon bell rang and she came down, her mother said—

"Lucy, my darling, I shall be glad to get you back to Oatlands. I am sure London and its dissipation does not agree with you."

Lucy made no answer, and ate so little, that after luncheon her mother called her to her, and tenderly asked her what ailed her—if she was suffering from headache? Then poor Lucy flung her arms about her neck, and bursting into a passion of tears, said:

"Mother—darling mother, *you* love me, don't you?"

"My dear child, yes, of course I do; what is the matter?"

"Nothing much," she said, trying to recover herself; "as you say, I think I am tired and nervous from too much gaiety. I long to get back to Oatlands; when may we go?"

"We have only another fortnight, dearest, and I know of only two engagements, so you will not have a very fatiguing time, and then a quiet winter in the country will set you to-rights. Cheer up, little woman; this is not a bit like you."

She knew that—she knew how unlike herself she was—how she felt an unjust anger against Jeanie, Francis, ay, and more than all against Everard—he who had been the idol of her young heart so long;—he to sneer and call her "perfect." What had she done to him, what had she done at all, to make all the world seem against her. She who fulfilled every duty with scrupulous exactness, who never considered herself in any matter, and gave up every inclination that interfered with the wishes of others; she who had kept the secret of her love for Everard so jealously, fearing that Jeanie loved him too, ready to give him up to her—ay, quite ready if she could believe their love was mutual; but Jeanie had laughed, and flirted, and received the attentions of others, how could she love Everard? and he—he had been so gentle and so kind, and since his visit to London by his manner filled her heart with fresh hope, so that all had wondered what had cha·ged the grave Lucy, and made her so bright and joyous. And now thus suddenly her hopes were dashed to the ground, her idol shattered at her feet, and she felt that not only did he first love her but despised her for a pretence of goodness he did not believe in. Such were the pleasant thoughts which tortured the heart of the young

girl, and kept her waking, though her mother sent her early to bed, thinking a good night's rest would restore her to her usual health and composure. The torturing night past, Lucy did rise in a better frame of mind, not because she had slept as her mother hoped, but because in her wakeful hours she had wrestled bravely with her angry feelings; she realised as she lay there what it was, that all who loved her had so often told her, was her fault, and praying earnestly for guidance and assistance, she determined to set to work to master this besetting sin: she knew as she lay there how natural was the desire to correct and admonish others even older than herself; how she, to use a homely proverb, would "measure other people's corn with her bushel," and thought all wrong who did not agree with her and do as she did. Bitter was her punishment, for she believed by this she had lost the love she might have gained. She could remember as she lay there many a time when she had reproved Carry, May, and Jeanie before Everard, and he had looked at her and then made excuse for the fault committed. Yes, she would strive against this—she would put a bridle on her lips, and only, as grandmamma wished her, teach by example. And so this wakeful night, and this her first severe trial, brought

with it its attendant good, and Lucy rose the next morning a wiser if a sadder girl. She had not yet paid her long-promised visit to Mrs. Bridgenorth. They had spent one happy day on the Wednesday, as agreed; and now, out of heart and spirits, Lucy felt to go to that quiet, happy little home for a few days would be such a comfort, so she made the request to her mother.

"I know she would have me, dear; I have only to write and say which day I will go."

"Well, you know, dearie, you will miss Mrs. Vincent Holmes's party if you go."

"That's just what I should like to miss."

She knew Everard had promised Mrs. Vincent, who was an old friend of his father's, to come up to this very party, and she would not have met him for worlds just then.

"I will speak to your father," said Mrs. Deane; "and if he has no objection you shall go. I think a change will do you good, for you look wretchedly."

Mr. Deane thought Lucy was looking very badly himself, and therefore, though he seemed very sorry she should lose the party, thought it advisable for her to go. Mrs. Bridgenorth was delighted at the prospect of having her, and the morning before the party, the carriage drove Lucy to Dulwich, her

mother going with her for the sake of the pleasant drive and for a chat with "Miss Barton," as they all felt still inclined to call her.

Jeanie was excessively sorry to lose Lucy, and much disappointed that she was not going to accompany her to the party. She said she should feel so strange without her, and her curiosity was greatly aroused to know what could have caused her sudden resolution to leave town. She was full of wonderment and conjecture, and no one could enlighten her, her mother only knowing that Lucy had said she felt fagged and ill, and wanted change and quiet.

Of course, when Everard arrived to accompany them to the party, Jeanie was full of the subject; but Everard was no wiser than any one else, and as Jeanie was going, he did not concern himself much about it. The assembly was a very brilliant one, and Jeanie greatly enjoyed it—as she always did. It was pleasant to watch her at a party, to see the brightness of her face, the thorough enjoyment with which she danced—not as if it were a matter of business that must be gone through, or a means of flirtation—but for the real pleasure of the exercise. She laughed with her partners, and accepted their attentions, but all with the most utter indifference. She went to a dance because she liked it; and she

did dance, with all her might, joyously and happily as a young girl should.

And Lucy sat at the open window of Mrs. Bridgenorth's pretty little drawing-room, looking out at the little garden bright with summer's richest blooms, with her kind friend beside her—happier far than she would have been in the crowded ball-room,—the cheerfulness and peace of the little household was so soothing to her excited feelings; and after a quiet night's rest, in the room she was promised to have when she came, where the roses stole in at the window, and seemed to pervade the room with their odour and fragrance, Lucy awoke refreshed and strengthened, and begged, if she was not intruding, to be allowed to stay a week. She was so happy! Margaret was only too pleased to have her, and they talked together over old times and memories; and Lucy led her to speak of her faults, and of the one in particular which had lately come before her in so marked a manner.

"You had no fault Lucy, darling, but that one; and that was a fault of manner, not of heart. You have broken yourself of that long ago, I daresay."

"No, indeed, they tell me not; but I will try. Shall I ever succeed?"

"Oh, yes. No one ever tried to cure a fault and

failed, if they tried in real earnest. I am sure you will."

"I hope so," said poor Lucy, with a heavy sigh; "though I don't know that it matters much now."

"Perhaps, dear," said Mrs. Bridgenorth, kissing her kindly, "that one little blemish belongs to you because nothing is to be perfect in this world."

Lucy smiled, and cordially returned her kiss. Praise was very soothing to her wounded feelings then.

They were both very sorry when the week ended; but on Lucy's return to town they were all delighted with the improvement in her appearance, and were glad they had let her go. The last week of their stay in London drew rapidly to a close. Francis was counting the days, for he was to be off to Yorkshire, shooting on the moors with his father. And the ladies, even Jeanie, seemed glad at the thought of returning to their pretty country home. The day before they left London, they were occupied in purchasing little remembrances for those they had left behind. A book for Carry, and a beautiful set of toys for May—a united present from all—a lovely model doll—and her cot, wardrobe, bath, towel-horse, powder-box and brush, each perfect models in their way.

Nothing could exceed May's delight when it was all unpacked, and displayed before her. The little tiny cot, in walnut wood, with bed, pillow, sheets and blanket, and a blue silk quilt. The wardrobe also, in walnut wood, with four shelves, and a hanging cupboard. The towel-horse to match, and the bath in a stand, exactly like the one nurse had often shown her that she had been washed in when she was a baby. Oh, it was all too delightful! Carry also shared in her delight; for though she was too old to own that she should like such things herself, she enjoyed helping May to play with them. Granny White had not been forgotten, and a warm woollen gown from Lucy, and shawl from Jeanie, made her intensely happy; more, too, from the idea that, amidst all their gaiety and grandeur, the poor old woman in the country had not been forgotten. Miss Beatson, and grandmamma, had also little souvenirs, and the servants, each new dresses; so that no one could complain.

Everard, of course, made his appearance shortly after his return; Lucy had nerved herself to meet him, and her manner was calm and kind as of old. Of course she was daily expecting that Jeanie would confide to her Everard's declaration of affection; but no: though he came frequently, the same friendly

terms still seemed to continue between them, and no event occurred to disturb the ordinary course of things at Oatlands. Miss Beatson got on very well with the little ones. May was able to read and write quite nicely, and Carry was getting on wonderfully at her studies, and losing her sharp, rude manner under Miss Beatson's firm though kind rule.

The corn was cut, and carried, and garnered into barns; the leaves were turning on the trees from their bright green to the sober tints of autumn; the nuts were again hanging in clusters in the woods; Francis had returned to Eton, and Everard had gone up to Cambridge for examination; Christmas was again thought of, and talked of, and winter arrangements being made. How quick the year had passed, they said; it seemed but the other day they were busy at the wreaths in the Church, and here was Christmas coming fast on them again.

One morning when Jeanie came down to breakfast, her father, with a peculiar smile, asked her if she had had any letters. She answered in the negative, wanting to know why he asked? He only laughed again, and said, "Never mind." So that of course Jeanie did mind very much, and wondered all breakfast time what he meant.

"I have had a letter," said Mrs. Deane, "from

Mrs. Stapleton, accepting my invitation for dear little Amy. She is to spend all Christmas with us."

"Oh, how delightful! Won't poor old Francis enjoy his holidays," said Jeanie. "May I tell him when I write?"

"Certainly, but I've no doubt he is informed by this time," answered Mrs. Deane.

"Yes, by-the-bye, I suppose he is," said Jeanie, laughing. "Oh, mamma dear, do you know I believe there is another disturbance at the Warleighs with Annabella."

"Indeed; how do you know?"

"Charlotte told me."

It was on Lucy's lips to say—"Gossipping again with Charlotte," but she put it back, muttering,—"What sort of disturbance—running away, again?"

"Yes, but this time it is to a House of Charity—she wants to be a Sister, now."

"The girl's mad," said Mr. Deane.

"Has she run away then, do you mean?" asked Miss Beatson.

"No, they caught her just making her escape, but she declares she will go; and they say Mrs. Warleigh is afraid to go out of the house or lose sight of her for a moment."

"I wondered she had not been to call; that

accounts for it, then, poor woman. There is nothing more sad than a wrong-headed, right-minded person."

"'A wrong-headed right-minded person,'" repeated Mr. Deane.

"Yes, dear; I mean a person who is thoroughly well-meaning and well-principled, yet is obstinately set against all received opinion, and holds fast to their own perverted views of everything."

"Oh, that's it. Now, Miss Jeanie, have you done your breakfast?"

"Yes, papa."

"Then come with me."

Wonderingly Jeanie followed her father into the library; then drawing a letter from his pocket, he said—

"Do you remember a gentleman of the name of Archibald Mackenzie?"

"Yes, of course I do."

"Were you particularly struck with him?"

"Good gracious! no, papa."

"Then he is with you, and requests me to allow him to renew your acquaintance, that he may make you an offer of his hand, and, Miss Jeanie,—three thousand a year."

Jeanie flung herself down into the nearest chair

and laughed for several minutes without stopping; and then jumping up again, flung her arms round her father's neck, saying,

"My own dear pet of a father, not for six thousand a year. I have much too happy a home to wish to exchange it for any other; and I'm not going to marry till I find a man as good as you, and that he need not flatter himself he is for one moment."

"Then I'm to say, 'Sir, you're not a bit like me, so my daughter won't have you.'"

"Well, words to that effect," she answered, laughing again. "It's the most ridiculous idea. Fancy me having a proposal! Oh, dear! it's most absurd. I must go and tell Lucy."

"And you seriously mean to refuse so excellent an offer. You'll never get another."

"Can't help it, papa, indeed; you'll have to put up with me for good and all."

"Very well. Off with you then, while I answer the unfortunate man. I think you're a great goose."

"No you don't, darling." And away she went, and he could hear her ringing peals of laughter as she ran down the passage, so absurd did it appear to her, that any one could in earnest want to marry her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

In the large drawing-room at the Elms that same morning sat old Mr. Everard sipping his coffee, his large deer-hound beside him—his only companion now, for Everard was at College. He wrote to his father very often, and an open letter from him now lay before him. He had read it twice, and was pondering on it now with knit brow and anxious face. How could he deny that dear boy, who had been his joy and comfort so many years, anything? and yet a favourite project of many more years' standing must be set aside if he granted his request.

Francis, in his room at Eton, was reading a letter also. We will take the liberty to look at his.

"Dear old Boy,—I have written to the governor —with what success I will immediately acquaint you. I have asked him if his heart is set on that other matter. If he says yes, it must be done, unless *her* happiness is implicated. I have told him

this,—that I have seen one whom alone I should like to make my wife, and if she returns my love, I can marry no one else; if not, I will do what he wishes, I shall care so little what becomes of me, and I don't think I shall make a brute of a husband. How grandly I talked about keeping my liberty a little while ago, and how soon I have become a slave. Good-bye, old boy. Write soon. Yours ever,

"H. E."

It was two days before he got his father's answer, anxiously as he watched for it. It came at last.

"My own dear Hugh,—You are too good and dutiful a son for me to vex you with any of my crotchets. To have taken to my arms before I die the daughter of my dearest friend, and called her my daughter, would have been great happiness to me, but to see *you* happy, still greater. Secure your happiness in what way you can, and you will make that of your affectionate "Father."

And so Jeanie received another proposal, but not this time did she go into fits of laughter. She folded the letter and put it in her pocket, and looked at Lucy. She had another letter at the same time, and

so could answer with truth, when asked, "It is from Amy." But she went to her own room, and read again the manly expressions of an honest love, and then with a face somewhat paler than its wont, and sadder than it had ever looked, wrote a kind and tender answer, though it contained a decided refusal, accompanied by a request that the matter should be a profound secret between them.

Christmas came, and Amy Stapleton with it. Mrs. Deane wrote to ask Everard to come as usual for a week, but to her surprise received for answer that he should only be at home for Christmas-day, and was then going to a friend in Devonshire. It was the first holidays since their intimacy that some of his time had not been passed with them.

Time flies fast enough with us all, and yet sometimes we wish to give it swifter wings. Perhaps those who have journeyed with us thus far through this family history, may be glad that we should take an author's privilege, and "annihilate both time and space," so that they may see the future of those whose fortunes we trust they have followed with some interest.

Well, then, let us look on some few years. Gone to her rest and her reward is the faithful servant, whose life was an example to all. In the village

churchyard lies Elisabeth Deane, aged eighty-four, a recumbent cross marking her resting-place. Past it has gone a wedding procession into the little church, and as the husband presses his new-made wife to his heart in the large drawing-room at Oatlands, he says,

"Will you tell me now why I have had to wait so long?"

"No; because one reason would make you conceited, the other I would rather not tell at all."

"Jeanie, you promised."

"I only said, perhaps."

"Well, I don't know that I care to know. You are mine now, thank Heaven! and that is all I care for."

Like a true woman, when he said he did not care to know, she fain would tell him; so putting her ear close to his, she said,—

"I thought I was not good enough for you first, and then I thought Lucy loved you, and I could not break her heart."

"And when she married, and so proved she didn't care a rush about me, then you felt good enough to come and propose to me."

"Hugh, for shame, I did not."

"Very like it, then, when you said——"

Jeanie's reason.

"Never mind what I said—here come all the rest of the people from church; behave yourself, do."

Yes, it is true, sad and shocking as it may seem. Lucy neither pined nor died of a hopeless attachment, and when a College friend of her brother's, a barrister of good standing, offered his hand, Lucy accepted the proposal, and on her marriage morning Jeanie showed her Hugh Everard's letter, and then told all to her mother, who had long wondered why Everard's visits were so rare, and so short. The next visit was of far longer duration, and the result was, what we have related; how far Everard's accusation was true, we leave our fair readers to judge, but perhaps Jeanie did give a broad hint. Old Mr. Everard had vowed never to forgive her, but when he saw her, and she told him she had not thought herself good enough for his boy, he altered his opinion, and soon there was no one in the world he loved so much as Jeanie, except Hugh; and the marriage a short time after of the young lady whom he had wished for a daughter-in-law to a young officer in India, to whom he then found she had been for years attached, left him nothing to regret; and when, a year after, a young Hugh was placed in his arms, he told his son he had nothing left to wish for.

It is easy to imagine the sensation produced at the Elms when the two married sisters, each with a baby, came to stay; the delight of Carry and May, who nursed the babies all day long, and could not make their minds up which was the prettiest. May's adoration for Everard had sobered down considerably in her heart; she still loved him very dearly, but she was too sly to express it now, growing up, as everyone acknowledged, the beauty of the family. It was well the girls were married, or she would have quite eclipsed them both. Francis and Amy had been waiting patiently for their wedding, for Francis wished to take his bride—still very delicate—to a home fitted for her; there were people of course to shake their heads and say how foolish, and what a bad thing was a long engagement, but the young folks heeded it not, Amy always smiling and saying, "What was worth having was worth waiting for."

Miss Beatson still remained with them a great institution—quite Mrs. Deane's right hand now her girls were gone—and as she appeared to have no matrimonial intentions, it appeared likely she would never leave Oatlands.

Wise, sensible, and cheerful, she was one of those persons of whom it is often said, "What were the

men about?" But it is well that there are such beings in the world, who having no special claims on their time, can go about a blessing and a comfort in many a home.

Another little Eva had brightened Margaret Bridgenorth's home, and was followed by so many little companions, that the small house at Dulwich had to be exchanged for one of much larger dimensions, and to the last arrival May, just confirmed, was, to her pride and delight, appointed sponsor.

Old Sir Charles Maudesley was gathered to his fathers, and his foolish little wife, tired of England and of everybody in it, went to live in Paris. Poor Mrs. Warleigh, looking twenty years older than she ought, from worry, vexation, and disappointment, had her two plain awkward girls still on her hands, Annabella having carried out her threat of joining a sisterhood. And, with the injustice which characterises many a bitter disappointed person, hating Mrs. Deane for the success she had had with her family, still unwilling to admit how right Mrs. Deane had been, and how wrong she had been herself; and even when Carry and May had both happy, married homes, still maintaining how infamous was the system of governesses, and how children could never do right or turn out

well, who were not entirely brought up and educated by their own mothers.

In the nest, from which all the nestlings have flown, Mr. and Mrs. Deane remain, cared for and dearly loved by Miss Beatson, who is to them the child of their old age, and whom they love dearly in return. And as they sit by their winter fire, or beneath the trees on the river's bank in the golden summer, they talk over their darlings' happy lives, and together bless God, who gave them grace wisely to bring up the little ones He had trusted them with—and with grateful hearts they remembered, in spite of Mrs. Warleigh's prophecy, that they have not one black sheep in their fold, and that all have turned out well, even the Naughty Girl of the Family!

THE END.

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